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GIANT **30TH** ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

GARY GYGAX · ED GREENWOOD · KEITH BAKER

Dragon®

ISSUE 344 · JUNE 2006

THE WIZARDS THREE

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NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2

SNEAK PREVIEW!

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4 NEW PLANAR DRAGONS

ECOLOGY OF THE DRACOLICH

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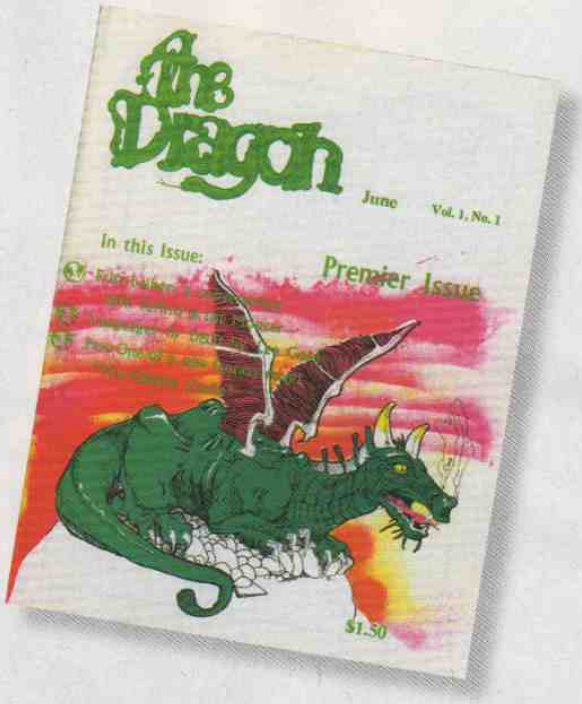
Steve Prescott unleashes Tiamat, in all her multi-headed majesty.

THIRTY YEARS



Thirty years ago this month, in the infancy of D&D, *The Dragon* emerged from its lair. Its opening "Publisher's Statement" proclaimed its mission as "to publish the best magazine devoted to Sword & Sorcery, Fantasy, Science Fiction, and Role Playing gaming." The issue itself included an amusing short story by fantasy giant Fritz Leiber, in which the author attempts to explain roleplaying games to his creations Fafhrd and Grey Mouser, articles on magic, science, and languages in D&D, and the first-ever appearance of the bulette, a classic D&D monster. *Dragon* was innovative from the very start.

Since our inaugural issue, the game has seen three edition shifts and countless incremental changes. Campaign settings have been born and died and born again, but *Dragon* has remained constant and strong, pushing the limits of the game and imagination itself.

In celebration of *Dragon*'s anniversary, we've pulled together an all-star assembly of special articles by some of the magazine's favorite authors. Gary Gygax, D&D's co-creator and *Dragon*'s first publisher, returns to our pages with "The Return of Gord," a thrilling fantasy adventure featuring a character first introduced in *Dragon* #100. Ed Greenwood's "A Dark and Stormy Knight" is the latest installment of The Wizards Three, a column that ran throughout the second edition AD&D era. The world got its first glimpses of Ed's Forgotten Realms campaign setting in these very pages, and it just didn't seem right to celebrate the magazine's birthday without inviting Elminster and company. Another favorite *Dragon* column, The Voyage of the *Princess Ark*, ran from #153 to #188, and original author Bruce Heard has returned to offer a "lost" installment. To represent the new era, Eberron creator Keith Baker presents Dreadhold, a memorable prison sure to find a home in your campaign.

June's theme, appropriately enough, is dragons, and this year we've got plenty of draconic lore to share. Two of *Dungeon* magazine's favorite authors reveal the "Ecology of the Dracolich," and our own Associate Editor Mike McArtor's new planar dragons add depth (and perhaps death) to the Outer Planes. The Sage, a mainstay of the magazine for much of its history, has some words on wyrms as well.

But the story of *Dragon* has always been about more than just new rules, fiction, and inspirational content. For thirty years, *Dragon* has also been a peerless source of new product information and industry coverage. This issue's D&D Buyer's Guide provides dozens of scoops and exclusive information on the future of D&D. Our Gen Con Preview gives a broad overview of the biggest RPG convention of the year, and believe me when I say there's more to come on this topic.

To commemorate our 30th anniversary, we've entered into a special agreement with Wizards of the Coast to distribute a unique repaint Sorcerer on Black Dragon miniature from the *War of the Dragon Queen D&D Miniatures* expansion, as pictured on the opposite page. For a small fee, subscribers can order their very own dragon, which comes on a special base featuring the *Dragon* logo. We hope that you'll enjoy your extremely limited edition figure, as we hope to offer more exclusive miniatures in the future.

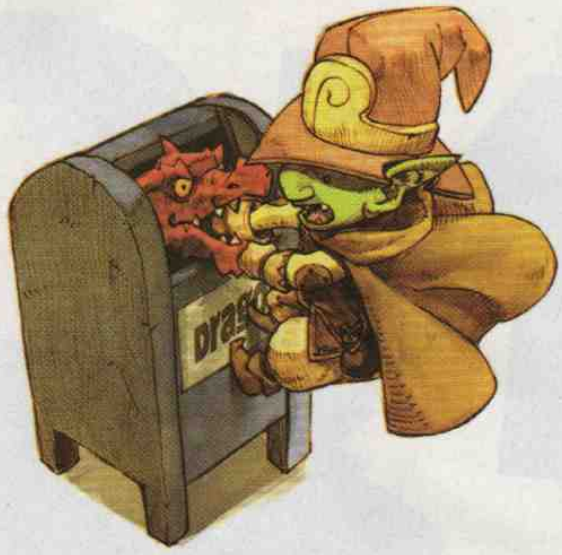
Looking at the pile of magazines on my desk, it's difficult to believe that it's been 30 years. The magazine has generated so much great material in that time that it's easy to get nostalgic. Having put together a celebration of *Dragon*'s proud past, I now turn to *Dragon*'s future, and my word we have some excellent things in store.

Trust me when I say you're not going to want to miss the next thirty years.

ERIK

Erik Mona
Editor-in-Chief
erikm@paizo.com

SCALE MAIL



Tell us what you think of this issue. Send an email to **scalemail@paizo.com**. Please include your name, city, and state.

OOTS SEALS THE DEAL

I just got my copy of #340 down here in Australia and saw Jennifer Rowe's letter.

Like her, I'm a long-time female gamer and a fan of The Order of the Stick, but unlike her, I'm not a long-time reader of DRAGON.

I've glanced at a few issues over the years, but each time I've decided, "No, not this month."

But now that it includes The Order of the Stick, I don't care whether there's anything else good in the magazine at all—I'd pay AU $11.95 a month just for an episode of OotS I can't see anywhere else. Any other good stuff (and I have in fact enjoyed the rest of the content in the issues I've bought) is simply gravy.

Good choice indeed, DRAGON; I'll be buying the magazine every month without fail for as long as OotS is in it.

Arian Hokin
Armidale, NSW, Australia

We're thrilled to have The Order of the Stick in DRAGON, where it undoubtedly belongs. The fan response to this strip has been nothing short of a phenomenon, and it has a very welcome place in these pages. Kudos to Rich Burlew for coming up with one of the funniest gaming cartoons in years, and kudos to DRAGON's readers for beating down our doors until we finally gave him a spot at the back of the magazine.

OLIDAMMARA STOLE MY ATTENTION

I've greatly enjoyed the content of the last few issues. As the father of a toddler, I have very little time in my schedule for game prep and the ideas from your mag help keep my games sharp, original, and fun. I have to say, though, you really outdid yourselves with issue #342's article on Olidammara.

I've enjoyed all of the Core Belief articles, but this article on the god of rogues really stood out. It had a lot of new content without making him into a god other than the one I remember from first edition, and the fluff is almost always turned into crunch by the end of the article. Not only can I give this god new life in my campaign, I can also make his worshipers markedly different from those of other gods.

Thanks again for doing such a top-shelf job, and keep that Sean K Reynolds where you can find him. I hope to see more from him soon.

Via Email

Fear not, Via Email! We've got Sean locked away in a deadly dungeon crafting more Core Beliefs articles even as I write this. Without question the column is the most popular feature we've introduced since the Demonomicon of Iggwilv, and I expect it to continue long into the future.

PLANT DOMAIN?

It seems that the Domain Powers article in DRAGON #342 missed the Plant domain. Was that accidentally cut from the article, or did it just get missed entirely?

Arazyr
From the Messageboards

MINI OF THE MONTH

Fans of some of the more obscure bits of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ephemera might have noticed one of their favorite childhood accomplices back in plastic as part of the recent *War Drums* D&D Minis expansion. War Duke, blood-stained champion of the Horned Society, compatriot of the sorcerer Kelek, and terror of 80s actions figures, appears as a rare in this set, complete with his own epic-level stat card. His bat-winged helm and skull shield appear almost exactly as they did in another recent reappearance, that time as a Critical Threat in DUNGEON #105 with art by Wayne Reynolds. Whether tearing through the battlefields of your campaign world or the minis skirmish table, this first edition icon refuses to rest quietly.

It appears that some evil gremlins got into that article and the following text was inadvertently cut from the "Domain Power" article in DRAGON *#342. We apologize for the mix-up.*

PLANT

Verdant Soul (Su): You have a deep connection with plants that allows you to share their resiliency. Activating this ability is a free action. When using this ability you receive a +4 racial bonus on saves versus paralysis, polymorph, poison, sleep, and stunning effects. In addition, when using this ability there is a 50% chance that any critical hit rolled against you is negated and damage is instead rolled normally. You may use this ability 1 round per day per cleric level you possess. These rounds need not be consecutive.

BAD ADVENTURER

I write to you on behalf of myself and my traveling companion, Beasley Quinn. We are avid players of the game and have enjoyed the insights and wonders you have tempted us with in the form of the Ecology sections, the Class Acts sections, and especially the comics. I have had a subscription with your publication for nearly four years, beginning with issue #299, but I have some back issues that go back even further.

I would like to start off by saying that I still think issue #301 had the best theme and articles touching on my favorite subject... PIRATES! The campaign components from that issue and issues #299 and #303 were awesome and I think you should do more themed articles like those. But I believe that the way in which #301 was done was still the best.

I believe that issues #291, #292, #326, #335, and #336 have the best cover art. And I will stand by Wayne Reynolds as the best damned D&D artist alive!

I love the balance between fluff and crunch in your magazine. I think you put out a great balance of information for those of us who play as both DMs and players. (My gaming crew gets together once a week and plays for four to twelve hours.) Needless to say, your magazines keep us entertained and facing some amazing creatures that none of us have heard of.

Now to the real crunch of my email, speaking of creatures none of us have heard of... In the recent issue of DRAGON magazine, #342 you made the worst "Adventurer" I have ever heard of. I am assuming it was only supposed to be a joke, but come on. A level 20 human with nearly all the base classes and impossible gear?

Just to name a few errors, you cannot be a monk AND a barbarian... their alignment requirements will not work. The same goes for a paladin and an assassin. Explain to me how you can have a sword with opposing enchantments... axiomatic/anarchic followed by holy/unholy? And how in the world is a human wielding/holding the *Axe of Dwarfish Lords*?!?! While I appreciate the concept of the impossible adventurer, why not make an adventurer that can at least be used in the game with amazing features and such?

Sorry about that barbarian rage there for a moment, my ogre blood sometimes gets the better of me. But as I was saying, you put together a really great magazine and I am glad I just renewed my subscription... but please, if you are going to make an insanely high-level character with a bunch of cool stuff waiting to be smashed and pillaged, at least make sure that he follows the rules just a little bit better.

Zander Adelstein
Half-Ogre Cleric of Othr

So noted.

GOOD ADVENTURER

I have to say that "The Ecology of the Adventurer" is probably one of the best articles you've ever published. I haven't had that good of a nerdy, gamer in-joke laugh since I bought *The Order of the Stick: On The Origin of the PCs*. Verily, a high five!

Phil C.
Madison, WI

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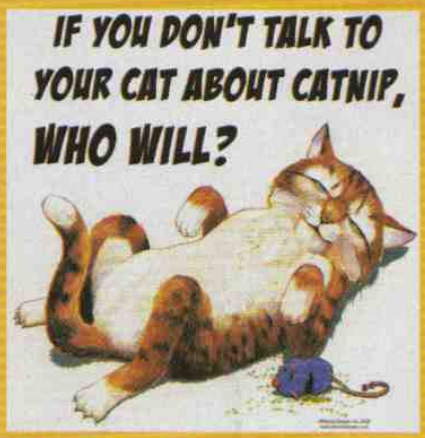

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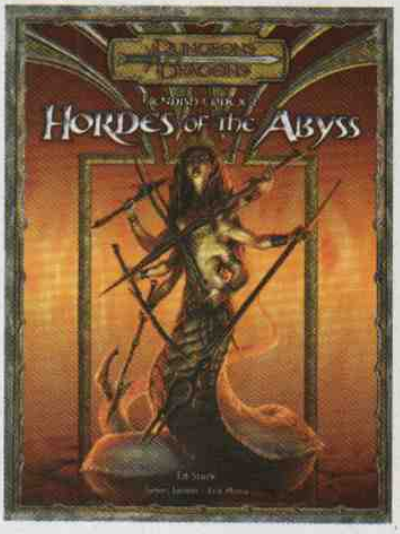
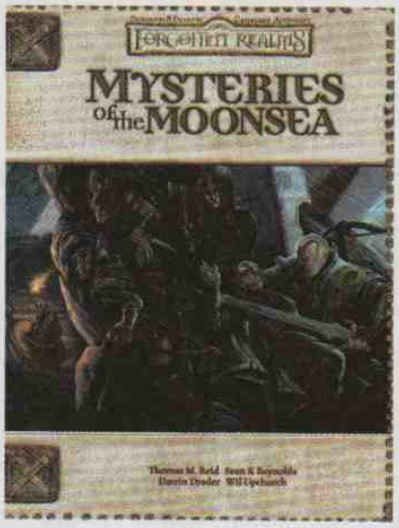
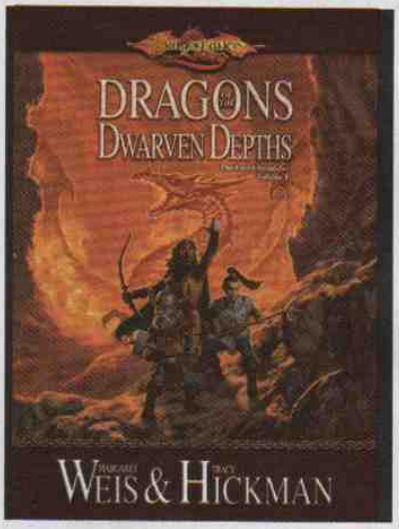


Detailing all things demonkind, *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss* is unleashed this month. Researched and designed by James Jacobs, Erik Mona, and Ed Stark, *Hordes of the Abyss* draws from source material scattered throughout D&D's 32-year history. Featuring detailed demonic lore, rules for trafficking with demons, details of the infinite Abyss, and more, this corrupt tome sets forth to be the *Draconomicon* of demons. Enhancing demonic versatility—with rules like scalable CRs for demon lords—*Hordes of the Abyss* reveals the secrets behind demonic plots, new and updated monsters, and evils you might have thought long forgotten.



A hands-on tour of one of the FORGOTTEN REALMS' best-known frontiers, *Mysteries of the Moonsea* presents a thirty-seven adventure arc, part campaign, part detailed sourcebook. Writers Sean K Reynolds, Thomas Reid, Darrin Drader, and Wil Upchurch establish a framework campaign where players tour through four Moonsea regions, each having major cities, villains, extensive full-color maps, and pre-built adventures—which saves the DM both the time and trouble of adapting a sourcebook. The loosely connected adventures take PCs from 1st to 18th level, yet allow DMs to fit the events into any ongoing campaign.



This month, Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman return to Krynn with DRAGONLANCE: The Lost Chronicles. Adding to the DRAGONLANCE Chronicles series, the setting's creators explore adventures mentioned but never fully detailed in the original tales. "Long- time readers of the series will enjoy being back with their old comrades once more, including favorite characters Tasslehoff and the wizard, Raistlin Majere," explains author Margaret Weis. The first book in this trilogy, *Dragons of the Dwarven Depths*, is available in hardcover now and details events following *Dragons of Autumn Twilight*, as the Heroes of the Lance quest for the lost Hammer of Kharas.

NEXT MONTH IN DRAGON #345

Demonomicon of Iggwilv: Kostchtchie
by James Jacobs
Discover a rage powerful enough to bow even the heads of giants: Kostchtchie, Prince of Wrath.

The Giants of Xen'drik
by Jason Bulmahn and Amber Scott
Savage drow and stone-hearted giants war in the depths of EBERRON's dark continent. A glimpse of the upcoming release, *Secrets of Xen'drik*.

Ways to Travel the World
by Martin Ralya
Leave your horse behind and travel the world by ship, caravan, submersible, or even airship.

Serpents of the Seas
by Morgan Peer and Tracey Peer
Three new dragons of the depths.

Plus!
Ecology of the Annis Hag, Spellcraft, Bazaar of the Bizarre, Class Acts, Sage Advice, comics, and more.

reported by Shelly Baur, Mike Fehlauer, Mike L. Fiegel, and James Sutter

LONG LIVE THE KING

Although he died in 1936 at the age of 30, Robert E. Howard (creator of Conan the Barbarian) has been a significant influence on modern authors, such as Robert Jordan—not to mention D&D fighters and barbarians everywhere. Howard's contribution can be seen in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS with every remorhaz, girallion, frost giant, and even the ubiquitous animated statue. Now, 100 years after Howard's birth, his gritty fantasy vision is being revitalized across various genres, including rumors of a new feature film, an anime series from Swordplay Entertainment, a popular d20 roleplaying game by Mongoose Publishing, and Funcom's upcoming *Age of Conan: Hyborian Adventures* MMORPG (**ageofconan.com**). Also, in this month's issue of Dark Horse Comics's Conan series, Mike Mignola (creator of *Hellboy*) offers his adaptation of Howard's unfinished story, "Hall of the Dead." Further information about Howard's centennial and upcoming releases and events can be found at **conan.com**.

TRUE DUNGEON

True Dungeon, the live action dungeon-delving experience, returns to Gen Con Indy this year with their newest adventure, *Escape from the Spider Cult*. With new designs and setting effects, True Dungeon pits real, everyday dice rollers against the rigors of a classic D&D dungeon. Players meet up in a meticulously-designed Tudor-style tavern to drink, swap goods (tokens representing armor, weapons, potions, and more), and grill NPCs for information. Then it's off to the dungeon: an intricate maze complete with textured stone walls, horrible monsters, real traps, and devious puzzles, all wired with 5.1 surround sound and custom lighting. The whole thing—the entire two-hour adventure—happens in real-time, using real player skills, with real physical feedback. Improvements include life-like stone walls, better lighting, new ceilings and flooring, and a single, more immersive plot. Tickets are now available online at **gencon.com**, while treasure token specials and more event details can be found at **truedungeon.com**. The event is expected to completely sell out, so interested adventurers should check out these sites soon.

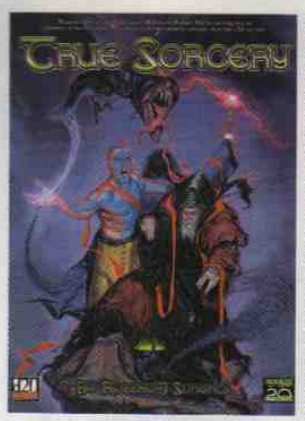
FACE THE DRAGON QUEEN

The hordes of Tiamat unleashed in the *Red Hand of Doom* super adventure continue their rampage next month with the *War of the Dragon Queen*. Tying into the ongoing Year of the Dragon, this tenth *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures* expansion is thick with new draconic menaces, their foul minions, and numerous heroes brave or foolish enough to stand against them. Twelve new Huge minis, creatures of a scale not seen since 2004's *Giants of Legend* expansion, make this sixty-miniature set all the more intimidating. These deluxe-sized boosters also introduce the spawn of Tiamat—half-dragon monstrosities like the Blackspawn Exterminator—abominations eager to enforce the Dragon Queen's cruel will. For a preview of even more *War of the Dragon* releases check out "Top Ten Dragons" on page 24 of this issue.

Blackspawn Exterminator

Twig Blight

Sorcerer on Black Dragon



MAGICAL MASTERY

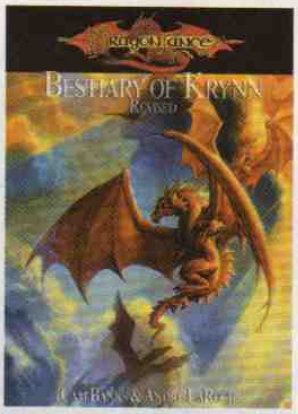
Take control of your magic. *True Sorcery*, a magic Sourcebook for OGL gaming by Green Ronin (**greenronin.com**), gets rid of spell slots and provides numerous options for magic users, letting you customize your spells for speed, distance, and potency. Expanded from the system presented in the 2005 ENnie award-winning *The Black Company Campaign Setting* (based on the novels by Glen Cook) *True Sorcery* provides new spells, feats, and a new item creation system, as well as conversion guides for all your favorite OGL systems, from *Iron Heroes*, to *True 20*, to *d20 Modern*.

MUSIC OF THE NIGHT

Good gaming music is hard to come by, but Nox Arcana (**noxarcana.com**) aims to please. Composed of accomplished gothic fantasy artist and Midnight Syndicate alum Joseph Vargo and musician/musical engineer William Piotrowski, the group combines everything from creepy choirs to rumbling orchestras, creating ambient works that easily add atmosphere to tense roleplaying situations. Each album is a self-contained narrative revolving around a classic horror theme such as the Cthulhu mythos or Dracula's Transylvania, with the latest, *Carnival of Lost Souls*, focusing on a demonic Vaudevillian circus.

MIDNIGHT MADNESS

Evil has won, magic is outlawed, and there's no gold in sight. What's a hero to do? A new expansion for Fantasy Flight Games' *Runebound* fantasy adventure board game, *Runebound: Midnight* challenges players to gather power, allies, and magic items in a world consumed by darkness. Based on the *Midnight* d20 fantasy setting, the new expansion changes gameplay in some major ways: heroes must sneak into occupied towns to rest, magic is rare but increases in power, and one of the players is likely a villain biding his time before betraying his companions. Learn more at **fantasyflightgames.com**.



BACK, YOU BEASTS!

DRAGONLANCE fans no longer need to scour online auctions for the setting's out-of-print book of monsters, as the *Bestiary of Krynn: Revised* releases next month. Writers Cam Banks and Andre La Roche added several all-new entries—like the skyfisher, yaggol, and cave lord—to the approximately ninety monsters. They also included templates for spicing core D&D monsters with DRAGONLANCE flavor, new dragon types, and random encounter tables specific to Ansalon. Based on feedback from fans, layout and organization has also been improved. Explore more of Krynn at **dragonlance.com**.

THIS MONTH IN DUNGEON #135

Funeral Procession

by Mark A. Hart

For months, a brutal serial killer has stalked the streets of Saltmarsh. Yet even after the murderer's death the local cult of Graz'zt has no intention of letting his killing spree end. A D&D adventure for 1st-level characters.

Chains of Blackmaw

by Nicolas Logue

Framed and imprisoned, Karl Manderholm awaits his execution at the hands of a deadly assassins' guild. In order to save him, the PCs must pose as lowly prisoners and expose the one man who can clear Karl's name, the assassin master himself. A D&D adventure for 10th-level characters.

Dawn of a New Age

by Tito Leati

Alhaster is in flames, choking on the poison of the Wormgod's first tentative breaths. The Age of Worms has begun, and unless the PCs can kill a god, this new age will be dark indeed. The final Age of Worms Adventure Path scenario for 20th-level characters.

SHIVERING TIMBERS

A life of piracy just got more dangerous. *Pirates of Davy Jones' Curse* adds an element of the fantastic to WizKids' (**wizkidsgames.com**) *Pirates* constructible strategy game. Since its inception, *Pirates* has featured fleets of historic ships, but with this standalone expansion an entire faction of ghost ships joins the fray, accompanied by sea monsters that might ally with any armada.

If ships on the sea aren't your fancy, perhaps you should consider ships in space. Control a space-faring fleet of refugees and dodge their tireless robotic pursuers in WizKids' new *Battlestar Galactica* collectible card game, based on the Sci-Fi Channel's hit series.

CASTLE KITS

What's the use of having an awesome miniature without an equally cool dungeon for it to explore? Castle Kits (**castlekits.com**) offers DMs whole labyrinths of pre-painted, miniature dungeon sets. Molded from Hirst Art's Castlemolds (**hirstarts.com**), Castle Kits's variety of ready-to-use dungeons include minute details, like flaming torches and pools of murky water, and even multiple levels. With shorter walls than many other premade dungeon sets, it's easier to position and move miniatures inside. Every piece is hand made upon being ordered—accounting for the 2 to 3-week delivery period—and can be customized as your dungeon-building needs or budget allow.

PTOLUS UNLEASHED

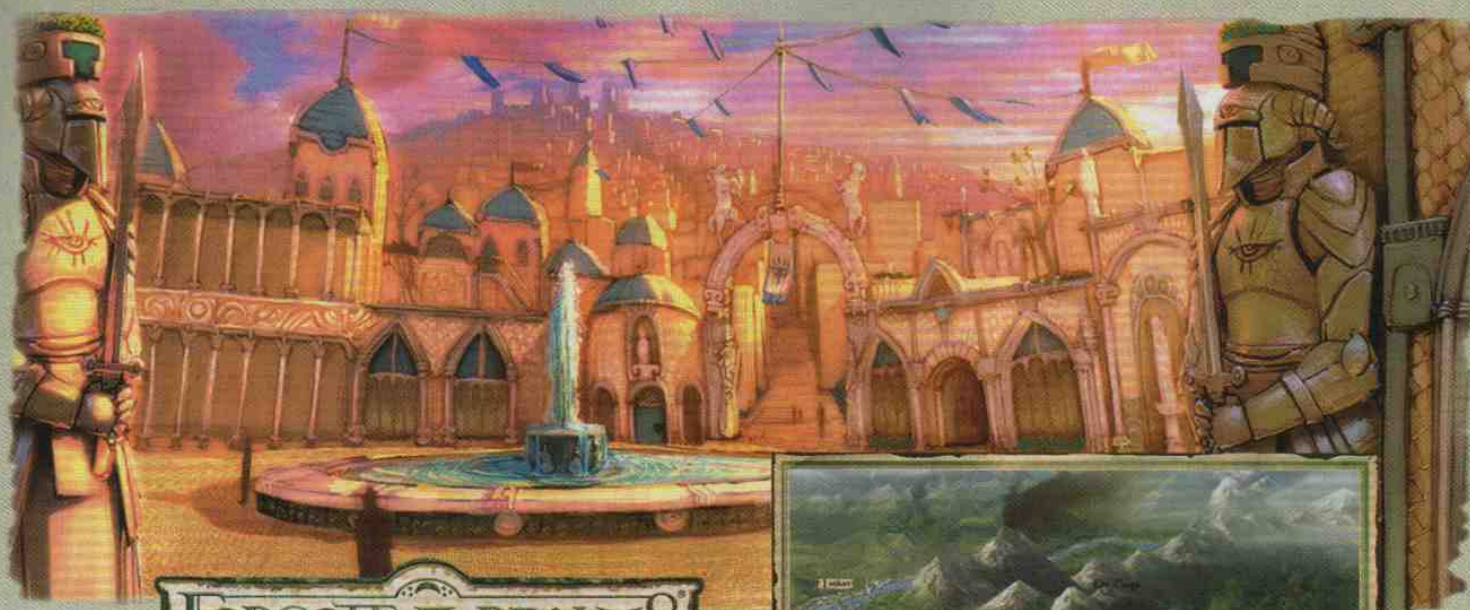
In preparation for August and the release of Monte Cook's behemoth *Ptolus: City by the Spire* campaign setting, this month Paizo Publishing releases several new miniatures reflecting the setting's unique flavor. The *Villains of Ptolus* boxed set features five archetypal city villains, from the Ratling and Chaos Cultist to the infamous Vai Assassin, all ready to bring the new setting to its knees. Fortunately for PCs, the Shuul Pistoleer, Sister of Silence, and Order of the Fist Initiate figures are also available to put them in their place. All miniatures are single-cast out of lead-free pewter and are available at **paizo.com**.

RPGA REPORT *by Stephen Radney-MacFarland*

Last month I unveiled some Gen Con Indy RPGA highlights, but one of them deserves a little more attention. Xen'drik Expeditions is coming, and it's going to be big.

While the campaign's big launch isn't until Gen Con, a campaign prerelease hits the street Origins weekend (June 29 to July 2). At Origins and other shows across the country you'll have the opportunity to play our first four Faction Adventures: *Divinely Inspired, The Sahuagin Stone, Principal of the Matter,* and *Prophecy's Unwitting Servant*. Also debuting are the first four new DM's Marks adventures. That's eight rounds of adventure released before the campaign's official launch!

At Gen Con Indy, the campaign really ramps up. Not only are we offering tables of those first Faction Adventures, the show introduces the first Expedition Adventure—a massive three-rounder titled *Well of Woe*. Gen Con also sees the releases of the second wave of faction adventures as well as *Spellspitter's Abaddon*, a special delve event only offered at Gen Con Indy, Gen Con So Cal, or Winter Fantasy. This delve is a departure from our usual campaign offerings. You can play it multiple times, and instead of chasing XP and gold, your character searches for special glyphstones. Each glyphstone has an in-game use or can be traded in for one of five RPGA Campaign Card promos, available only at those shows. Character death also doesn't stop you in *Spellspitter's Abaddon*. If you die, the strange properties of this cursed maze spits you out, giving you the opportunity to get back in line and give it another shot. Check out these slots and more of the RPGA's Gen Con plans at **rpga.com**, **gencon.com**, and in the Gen Con Preview on page 38 of this issue.



FORGOTTEN REALMS

Neverwinter Nights II

A First Look with Exclusive Interviews and Images

by F. Wesley Schneider • images provided by Atari

About 250 miles north of regal and raucous Waterdeep, along the Sword Coast, lies a settlement merely a fraction of the City of Splendors's size but almost just as well known. While famed for its gardens, water clocks, and peaceful sensibilities, the city of Neverwinter nonetheless seems to attract peril and intrigue, making it a favorite stop for legions of the bravest and most daring adventurers in the FORGOTTEN REALMS. But in the coming months, with the release of *Neverwinter Nights II*, the face of Neverwinter—and, indeed, how D&D is played online—changes as never before.

Designed by Obsidian Entertainment, *Neverwinter Nights II*—the sequel to one of the most popular and elaborate D&D computer games ever—releases this September. With a complete single-player storyline, multiplayer online capabilities, and powerful options for designing your own adventures, this sequel promises to employ and improve upon many of the features that made 2002's *Neverwinter Nights* so impressive. "A lot of the work in *Neverwinter Nights II* has been to expand on what the original game has established—improvements to the storyline, conveying that storyline, graphical improvements, scripting and toolset flexibility, et cetera," explains *Neverwinter Nights II's* creative director, Chris Avellone.

The game has some big shoes to fill, though. *Neverwinter Nights II's* predecessor was developed by Bioware—the esteemed designer of the incredibly popular *Jade Empire* and *Baldur's Gate* series—and the company that many consider to be the best computer RPG makers in the business. For *Neverwinter Nights II*, Obsidian Entertainment takes the reins, in an agreement much like the one that saw them design the sequel to Bioware's now famous *STAR WARS: Knights of the Old Republic* roleplaying game. "Obsidian has many members of the crews that worked on *Fallout*, *Fallout 2*, *Planescape: Torment*, *Icewind Dale*, *Heart of Winter*, *Icewind Dale 2*, *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*, and others," Avellone assures us. "*Neverwinter Nights II* is in good hands."

A few changes are immediately noticeable, though. Most notably, the game has changed from its forebears' top-down views to using a camera that can move around the character you create. The game's Lead Designer, J.E. Sawyer, notes that "There is no first-person mode, but you can otherwise look anywhere you want." While this creates a more natural viewpoint, it also adds new degrees of realism to the game. For example, "The sky is integrated into the day and night cycle and players

should expect to see celestial bodies rising and falling, [and] clouds growing and shrinking as time passes."

IN THE REALMS

As with any game set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS, a number of questions immediately come to mind: "Where does the story take place?" "What monsters and bad guys are there?" "Do I get to fight Drizzt or Elminster?" Answering a few of these must-know questions, Avellone tells us that "The story starts in the Mere of Dead Men along the Sword Coast, in the farming village of West Harbor. The events in the story take place several years after those in *Neverwinter Nights*, which are referred to and have much to do with the problems facing Neverwinter at the moment.... Our designers and in particular Tony Evans (one of the game's Senior Designers) have taken special care in making sure that certain individuals from the FORGOTTEN REALMS source material make an appearance in the game." Realms fans should also recognize many locations and characters, including "the Mere of Dead Men, confrontations with Luskan and the Hosttower of the Arcane... [and] a few cameos here and there from familiar figures." There also promise to be a few unexpected twists, like "D&D canon that exists outside of the FORGOTTEN REALMS and involves the planes and histories of cultures not native to Faerûn in the slightest."

D&D WITHOUT PEN AND PAPER

One of the challenges of any DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game inevitably proves to be interpreting the feel of D&D into a different medium. *Neverwinter Nights II* makes use of the full D&D 3.5 rules, which should be evident in nearly every action and character decision. "In many respects, character creation, feat selection, spell use, and combat mechanics is what you would expect playing 3.5 D&D, so there should be no surprises

there," says Avellone. It also sounds like the new rules make for some gratifying additions: "Our implementation of attacks of opportunity and the Cleave variants have changed in *Neverwinter Nights II*. Both should arrive much more quickly when they are triggered. If your 15th-level fighter wades into a swarm of weak monsters, one hit should trigger an almost instantaneous barrage of Cleave attacks at the surrounding victims. Similarly, if a wizard starts to cast *burning hands* within your threatened area, your character's attack of opportunity should smack the caster immediately."

Character creation also mimics much of D&D's vast flexibility. "The original game hit all the basic D&D staples pretty well, so we're just trying to build upon that. NWN2 should feature all of the basic character choices you found in the first game, and then some," explains Sawyer. "Players have an enormous degree of customization. For each sex and race, you have several head options. From there, you can also specify different types of facial hair and hairstyles.... Even standard armor can have a number of attachments adjusted in the toolset. Players can pick specific

styles of armor they like and also mix and match gloves or boots or helms as they see fit." Avellone goes on to add that this freedom also extends beyond the core D&D rulebooks when it comes to a character's race. "Tieflings, deep gnomes, duergar, drow are all available, including the more standard PC races." Players can even choose their sidekicks and have "up to three companions traveling with you, plus animal companions or familiars, and even set up additional henchmen on top of that."

Additional options like alignment and the way you play the game also significantly change the experience, revealing new allies, adventures, and opportunities, such as prestige classes. A feature picked up from the last *Neverwinter Nights*' expansions, both familiar prestige classes and some newly created for the game allow customization beyond just a character's base class.

From the sounds of it, though, variety isn't limited just to characters. As in any D&D game, one of the best parts is the monsters. Avellone reports more than ninety different monster models. "Of course, with tinting, armor attachments, scaling options (giant goblins, anyone?), you can really go crazy with appearances, so you can do a lot of variants of these models. Shrinking umber hulks is kind of fun. And they're cute, too."

With the difficulty of designing a game as detailed as *Neverwinter Nights II* it seems like it would be easy to cut corners and avoid working within the restraints of rules as complex as the D&D core material. Addressing this, Avellone explains: "Throughout the project, we've run all the content by Wizards of the Coast to get their input and a second set of eyes on it... we're all fans of the license, so we're trying to implement it as faithfully as possible."

BEHIND THE DM SCREEN

The core game aside, the feature many gamers are most looking forward to is an update of *Neverwinter Nights*' incredibly versatile—though at times complicated—adventure design toolkit. "The new toolset's capabilities will be familiar to anyone who worked with the *Neverwinter Nights* editor, but we've beefed it up to include more options," Avellone tells us. "Our scripters have built some cool default artificial intelligence for combat creatures that should allow a variety of creature behaviors to be easily set.... They've also been working hard on an ambient life system for villages, towns, and even animals in the wilderness that [make the world] feel more natural and alive." Features like this promise to make life much easier for adventure designers, forgoing some of the complexities of writing detailed commands and interaction scripts. "We've taken pains to make many of the toolset's standard scripting functions easier, although people with some basic scripting knowledge will be able to get much more mileage out of certain functions."

This functionality seems to be an ongoing theme with the new toolset, even though it keeps the core D&D rules as an essentially unchangeable baseline, "The new editor's flexibility lies primarily in workflow options. There's not a lot of stuff there for creating new rules-based content, but users can do a lot more with tabbed editing, docking tool palettes, more useful dialogue editor feedback, and so on," Sawyer continues. "*Neverwinter Nights II* also has a pre-fab system set up in it," adds Avellone, "so you can make templates of various item configurations [and] encounter configurations, and then

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS OF OLD

Neverwinter Nights first appeared in 1991 as a computer roleplaying game playable through America Online. Designed by Stormfront Studios, this early incarnation of the game made use of Advanced DUNGEONS & DRAGONS rules and many of the same conventions and graphics of the early SSI gold box games—*Pool of Radiance, Curse of the Azure Bonds, Champions of Krynn*, and the like. With AOL's chat room capabilities, hundreds of online guilds and adventuring parties sprung up surrounding the game, uniting thousands of D&D players as never before. Despite its success, though, the program was removed from AOL's game channel in 1997, partially as a result of *Ultima Online's* rising popularity. Yet, even today the first *Neverwinter Nights* still influences gaming, not just in its popular sequels, but in the booming genre of graphical massively multiplayer online RPGs, of which it was the first.

export them into other modules—if you're getting exhausted of doing fifteen plus inns, taverns, or goblin campsites, you can copy the basic configuration of an inn "pre-fab" into an area and then move selected pieces around to customize it. It's pretty powerful for adding life and ambiance to an area." The designer also leaves behind the grid-based restrictions of its predecessor, making environments "much more natural without the tile-based feel of the original game."

Sawyer also mentions another interesting addition to the toolset, which "allows designers to make overland maps which the player can travel over instantly. So, if you want to make a campaign that runs from Phlan to Lathtarl's Lantern to Cimbar, you can show the true distance the player is covering on the world map." This addition allows designers to move their adventures not merely across the Realms, but ultimately to any world they care to design.

While Avellone hints at a few other additions, increased options and flexibility seem to be bywords of the new *Neverwinter Nights II* designer. "Just as with the *Neverwinter Nights* toolset... our goal is to give players the most comprehensive set of tools to make adventures for their friends, set up their own quests, place their own loot, monsters, and so on," not to mention setting DMs up with all the resources they need to "surprise the hell out of the players."

Overall, *Neverwinter Nights II* seems to promise more than just a faithful sequel to a fantastic D&D game, but also an innovative new way create adventures and play D&D on those nights everyone can't gather around the gaming table. As for the rest of the details, Avellone teases, "The actual combat, encounters, quests, and the plot... well, we'll leave that for the players to discover."

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TOP TEN DRAGONS

Over the past three years, the *D&D Miniatures* line has introduced a menagerie of fearsome and fantastic dragons—each one generating excitement and a fair amount of dread in both the D&D roleplaying game and miniatures skirmish play. With all the dragon-related material releasing this year, you can probably expect at least one of these ten coolest wyrms from *D&D Miniatures* to land on your battlemat sometime soon.

10 MEDIUM BLACK DRAGON (Dragoneye)

Even after nearly three years of *D&D Miniatures*, one of the first five dragons introduced to the game still holds up among the best draconic minis out there, setting the bar for detail, paint, dynamic pose, and presence. No wonder it also did duty as the boss monster in 2004's *Dungeons & Dragons Basic Game*.

9 LARGE BLUE DRAGON (Deathknell)

Replacing the Medium Black in the forthcoming redesigned *D&D Basic Game*, the Large Blue is based directly on its *Monster Manual* illustration. Now perched atop a wedge of rock, with its upraised wings and downward-gazing glare, this desert dweller evokes the image of being high above its soon-to-be-ambushed prey.

8 HUGE RED DRAGON (Giants of Legend)

Probably the most sought-after mini from the inaugural set of Huges, the Huge Red was easily the most intimidating creature you could bust out for a very long time. Its powerful build and base-filling wingspan make it easy to imagine the aura of its frightful presence. Its toothy maw, in the midst of opening wide, makes you wish for a scroll of *protection from energy (fire)*.

7 LARGE COPPER DRAGON (Angelfire)

The Large Copper Dragon sports the first (and still best) use of patina on a metallic dragon—the trailing edges of those wings never fail to catch the eye and that oxidized copper tinge also fills the space between the dragon's gleaming scales. It makes you want to make up reasons to include good dragons in your game.

6 HUGE GOLD DRAGON (Giants of Legend)

Of course, if you're creating an encounter with a good dragon, go big. The Huge Gold Dragon exudes power, but with restraint—this is clearly a good guy. Stately and graceful, with an intricately detailed sculpt and paint, he towers over any average adventuring party, imparting wisdom and advice with a slightly bemused look.

5 SORCERER ON BLACK DRAGON (War of the Dragon Queen)

The Huge black dragon half of this mini strikes an imposing figure. With its readily identifiable curving horns, this is possibly the best black dragon sculpt going. Paizo's exclusive repaint of this monstrosity (see page 9 of this issue) also makes for a ferocious alternative.

4 ASPECT OF TIAMAT (War of the Dragon Queen)

As the hugest of the Huges, the Aspect of Tiamat is an amazingly detailed incarnation of the Chromatic Dragon's grandeur. Each of her five heads is an exemplary model of its respective species' physical traits and incorporates extra details that give each one a little personality and character.

3 DRACOLICH (War of the Dragon Queen)

The Dracolich oozes with undead menace. The most impressive part about this mini is the hollow ribcage that you can see right through. Yet there's still plenty of details to note—forty-four individually rendered tail vertebrae, holes in the wing membranes, and an array of spikes festooning what could have only been an amazingly nasty blue dragon.

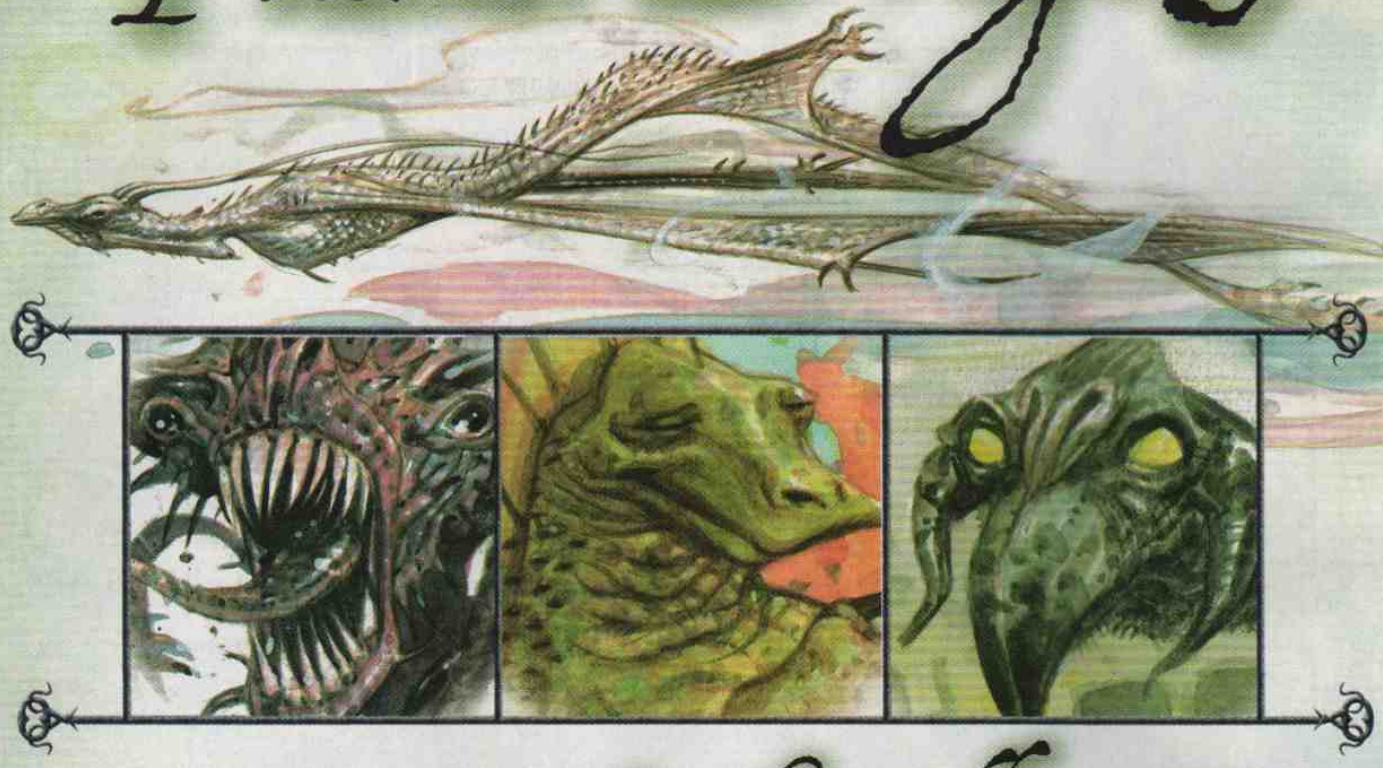
2 GARGANTUAN BLACK DRAGON (D&D Icons)

Sheer size can earn you the number two slot—and black dragons don't get any bigger than this. As the first offering in the D&D Icons line of limited-edition miniatures, the Gargantuan Black Dragon rears up to tower over every other D&D mini that's come before it—its frill brushes up against the 8-inch mark and those black-and-green mottled wings span 11 inches. Gazing downward with its overly fanged mouth, complete with forked tongue, the Gargantuan Black Dragon isn't for informational encounters.

1 COLOSSAL RED DRAGON (D&D Icons)

Nothing can prepare you for the first time you see this not-so-miniature monstrosity actually sitting before you. Standing 14 inches tall and just over a foot wide, the Colossal Red Dragon absolutely dominates any battlemat, table, or shelf it lands upon. Stupefyingly detailed, this "miniature" depicts every physical aspect of a red dragon with mesmerizing accuracy—particularly the fearsomely crafted head (complete with a removable gout of clear plastic flame). One of the most interesting features is the crimson-tinted clear plastic used on its wing membranes to create a realistically translucent appearance. Character deaths should be dramatic and the Colossal Red Dragon will certainly deliver.

Planar Dragons



wyrms of another world

by Mike McArtor • illustrated by Tom Fowler

The chromatic and metallic dragons of the Material Plane by no means account for the entirety of the draconic races. Nearly every plane of existence has at least one unique breed of dragon to claim as its own. Most of these planar dragons reflect their home planes in some fashion, often through their abilities but sometimes merely through their alignments. Sages and explorers occasionally find a new breed of planar dragon, with the four most recently discovered kinds detailed herein.

Planar dragons lack the innate spellcasting ability of other true dragons. They do, however, often possess a variety of spell-like abilities. A planar dragon uses its age category as its caster level for all spell-like abilities. Although native to planes other than the Material Plane, these creatures nonetheless have the dragon type and are not outsiders. Instead, they all possess the extraplanar subtype.

astral dragon

Dragon (Extraplanar)
Environment: Astral Plane
Organization: Solitary (1 dragon, any age), clutch (1d2+1 wyrmlings, very young, young, or juveniles), family (pair of mature adults and 1d2+1 offspring), or flight (2d4+2 young adults or older)
Challenge Rating: Wyrmling 3; very young 5; young 6; juvenile 8; young adult 11; adult 13; mature adult 15; old 17; very old 19; ancient 21; wyrm 23; great wyrm 24
Treasure: Triple standard
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: Wyrmling 6–7 HD; very young 9–10 HD; young 12–13 HD; juvenile 15–16 HD; young adult 18–19 HD; adult 21–22 HD; mature adult 24–25 HD; old 27–28 HD; very old 30–31 HD; ancient 33–34 HD; wyrm 36–37 HD; great wyrm 39+ HD
Level Adjustment: Wyrmling +4; very young +5; young +6; others —

This dragon has long trailing horns, similar in appearance to massive and rigid antennae, trailing back from its wedge-shaped head. Its narrow wings stretch out far wider than other dragons of its size. Opalescent eggshell-colored scales smoothly overlap on its sleek body.

Regardless of their size or age, astral dragons always move with incredible grace and fluidity.

Astral dragons act as guardians of the Astral Plane. They view any nonnative creature or object as an affront to the inherent beauty and sanctity of their infinite home. Astral dragons wage an endless and fruitless war against the githyanki, whom they see as the ultimate usurpers and befoulers of the plane. Once or twice a decade a flight of astral dragons assaults the astral fortress of N'gati (see *Dragon* #305), but as of yet none has caused more than minor damage to the city. These battles usually turn quite fierce when the allies of the githyanki, red dragons, become involved.

Unlike other dragons, an astral dragon does not have a specific lair, as it considers the entire Astral Plane its home. An astral dragon family or flight frequently lays claim to some large piece of solid matter drifting through the plane (such as the body of a dead deity). The dragons in the group store their treasures within the mass and take turns defending it.

An astral dragon never speaks to nonnative creatures on the Astral Plane, but it converses pleasantly with any creature that "belongs" on the plane (i.e., creatures native to the Astral Plane).

combat

Astral dragons avoid combat beyond hit-and-run attacks with their breath weapons. An astral dragon watches potential foes, noting which ones move fastest in the astral mist. It then moves within range and breathes at the fastest creature before retreating long enough for its breath weapon to recharge. Despite the cowardly appearance of their tactics, astral dragons make for persistent foes on the Astral Plane. Astral dragons seek to *dismiss* creatures without killing them in order to protect their home plane from the clutter of dead bodies. It's easier to expel an unwanted visitor, after all, than to dispose of its corpse.

If forcibly removed from the Astral Plane (an astral dragon never willingly leaves its home) an astral dragon rarely survives for very long. On a plane with any kind of actual gravity the astral dragon's massive trailing horns weigh down its head, preventing it from making a bite attack. The dragon is always considered to be carrying a heavy load while in gravity and its fly maneuverability is reduced to clumsy.

Breath Weapon (Su): An astral dragon has two types of breath weapon, a line of *dismissal* and a cone of scouring dust. A creature struck by an astral dragon's line breath weapon must succeed at a Will save or instantly return to its home plane, as per the *dismissal* spell. Like that spell, there is a 20% chance the astral dragon's line breath weapon actually sends the subject to a plane other than its own (but never back to the Astral Plane).

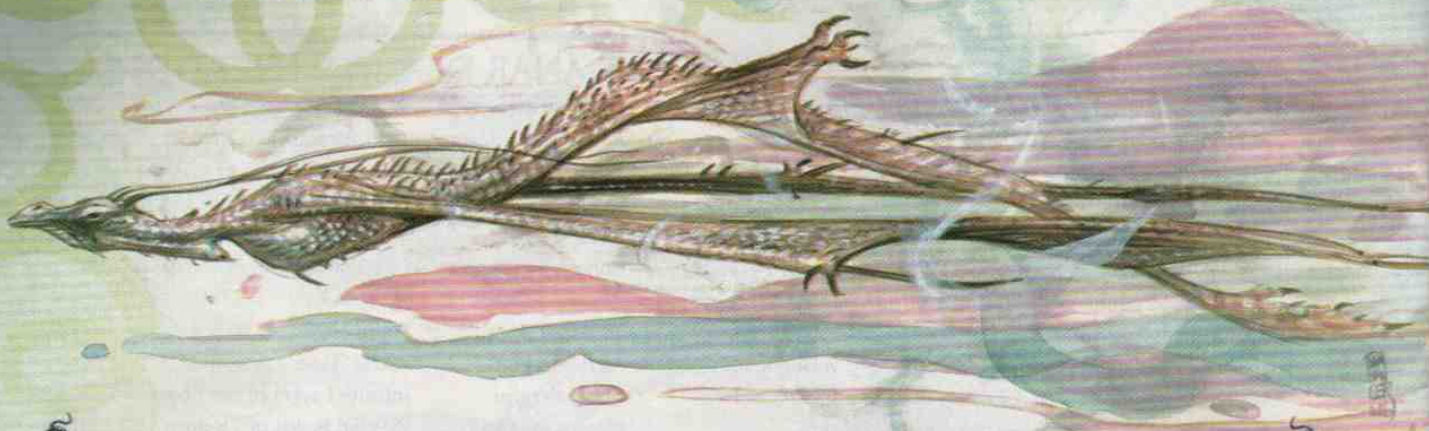
PLANAR DRAGON LOCATIONS

Dragon #321	Plane
Adamantine dragon	Twin Paradises of Bytopia
Arboreal dragon	Olympian Glades of Arborea
Axial dragon	Clockwork Nirvana of Mechanus
Beast dragon	Wilderness of the Beastlands
Concordant dragon	Concordant Domain of the Outlands

Dragon #344	Plane
Astral dragon	Astral Plane
Chole dragon	Infinite Layers of the Abyss
Elysian dragon	Blessed Fields of Elysium
Gloom dragon	Gray Wastes of Hades

Monster Manual II	Plane
Hellfire wyrm	Nine Hells of Baator

Draconomicon	Plane
Battle dragon	Heroic Domains of Ysgard
Chaos dragon	Ever-Changing Chaos of Limbo
Ethereal dragon	Ethereal Plane
Howling dragon	Windswept Depths of Pandemonium
Oceanus dragon	Any Upper Plane
Pyroclastic dragon	Bleak Eternity of Gehenna
Radiant dragon	Seven Mounting Heavens of Celestia
Rust dragon	Infernal Battlefield of Acheron
Styx dragon	Any Lower Plane
Tarterian dragon	Tarterian Depths of Carceri



ASTRAL DRAGONS BY AGE

Age	Size	Hit Dice (hp)	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	Base Attack/ Grapple	Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Breath Weapon (DC)	Frightful Presence DC
Wyrmling	M	5d12 (32)	11	13	10	14	15	14	+5/+5	+5	+4	+5	+6	1d6 (12)	—
Very young	L	8d12 (52)	13	13	10	14	15	14	+8/+13	+8	+6	+7	+8	2d6 (14)	—
Young	L	11d12+11 (82)	15	13	12	16	17	16	+11/+17	+12	+8	+8	+10	3d6 (16)	—
Juvenile	L	14d12+14 (105)	17	13	12	18	19	18	+14/+21	+16	+10	+10	+13	4d6 (18)	—
Young adult	H	17d12+34 (144)	19	13	14	18	19	18	+17/+29	+19	+12	+11	+14	6d6 (20)	22
Adult	H	20d12+60 (190)	21	13	16	20	21	20	+20/+33	+23	+15	+13	+17	8d6 (23)	25
Mature adult	H	23d12+92 (241)	23	13	18	20	21	20	+23/+37	+27	+17	+14	+18	10d6 (25)	26
Old	G	26d12+104 (273)	25	13	18	22	23	22	+26/+45	+29	+19	+16	+21	12d6 (27)	29
Very old	G	29d12+145 (333)	27	13	20	22	23	22	+29/+49	+33	+21	+17	+22	14d6 (29)	30
Ancient	G	32d12+160 (368)	29	13	20	24	25	24	+32/+53	+37	+23	+19	+25	16d6 (31)	33
Wyrm	C	35d12+210 (437)	31	13	22	26	27	26	+35/+61	+37	+25	+20	+27	18d6 (33)	35
Great wyrm	C	38d12+266 (513)	33	13	24	26	27	26	+38/+65	+41	+28	+22	+29	20d6 (36)	37

Creatures within the cone of dust take the damage listed from a storm of scouring astral wind that flays the skin like a sandstorm. A Reflex save halves the damage.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*eagle's splendor* (very young or older), *touch of idiocy* (juvenile or older); 1/day—*banishment* (ancient or older), *detect animals or plants* (adult or older).

Astral Familiarity (Ex): An astral dragon moves through the Astral Plane as if its Wisdom were 8 points higher than it really is when making a check to alter the subjective directional gravity.

Detect Extraplanar (Su): An astral dragon can continuously detect creatures not native to the Astral Plane. This acts in most ways like the *detect evil* spell, but it extends to a range of 30 feet per age category and it does not actually detect the creature's alignment—only that the creature isn't native to the Astral Plane. An astral dragon can determine a creature's nature after concentrating for a single round (no additional information is provided by multiple rounds of concentration). The astral dragon can suppress or resume this ability as a free action.

Null Gravity Aura (Su): A young or older astral dragon radiates a field of null gravity, changing the area around it from subjective direction gravity to no gravity. Those within the area merely float unless they possess flight or some other means of magical movement. See page 147 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for information on the effects of gravity on the Astral Plane. This aura has a radius of 30 feet plus 30 feet per age category beyond young. This aura does not affect the astral dragon, allowing it to use subjective direction gravity and its flight to move at incredible speeds. An astral dragon can suppress or resume this ability as a free action.

Severing Bite (Su): A juvenile or older astral dragon's bite severs silver cords on a successful critical hit (see *astral projection* on page 201 of the *Player's Handbook*) in addition to dealing extra damage.

WYRM ASTRAL DRAGON **CR 23**

N Colossal dragon (extraplanar)

Init +1; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvison 120 ft., keen senses; Listen +46, Spot +46

Aura frightful presence (330 ft. radius, DC 35), null gravity (270 ft. radius)

Languages Common, Draconic

AC 37, touch 3, flat-footed 36

hp 437 (35 HD); **DR** 20/holy or unholy

Immune paralysis, sleep

ASTRAL DRAGON ABILITIES BY AGE

Age	Speed	Initiative	AC	Special Abilities	SR
Wyrmling	20 ft., fly 100 ft. (average)	+1	15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural) touch 11, flat-footed 14	Astral familiarity, detect extraplanar	—
Very young	20 ft., fly 100 ft. (average)	+1	17 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +7 natural) touch 10, flat-footed 16	*Eagle's splendor*	—
Young	20 ft., fly 150 ft. (average)	+1	20 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +10 natural) touch 10, flat-footed 19	Null gravity aura	16
Juvenile	20 ft., fly 150 ft. (average)	+1	23 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +13 natural) touch 10, flat-footed 22	Severing bite, *touch of idiocy*	17
Young adult	20 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+1	25 (–2 size, +1 Dex, +16 natural) touch 9, flat-footed 24	DR 5/holy or unholy	19
Adult	20 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+1	28 (–2 size, +1 Dex, +19 natural) touch 9, flat-footed 27	*Detect animals or plants*	20
Mature adult	20 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+1	31 (–2 size, +1 Dex, +22 natural) touch 9, flat-footed 30	DR 10/holy or unholy	22
Old	30 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+1	32 (–4 size, +1 Dex, +25 natural) touch 7, flat-footed 31		23
Very old	30 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+1	35 (–4 size, +1 Dex, +28 natural) touch 7, flat-footed 34	DR 15/holy or unholy	25
Ancient	30 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+1	38 (–4 size, +1 Dex, +31 natural) touch 7, flat-footed 37	*Banishment*	26
Wyrm	30 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+1	37 (–8 size, +1 Dex, +34 natural) touch 3, flat-footed 36	DR 20/holy or unholy	28
Great wyrm	30 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+1	40 (–8 size, +1 Dex, +37 natural) touch 3, flat-footed 39		29

Fort +25, **Ref** +20, **Will** +27

Spd 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 200 ft. (poor)

Melee bite +38 (4d8+10) and
2 claws +35 (4d6+5) and
2 wings +35 (2d8+5) and
tail slap +35 (4d6+15)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (20 ft. with bite)

Base Atk +35; **Grp** +61

Atk Options Cleave, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, severing bite, Snatch

Special Actions breath weapon, crush (4d8+15), Spring Attack, tail sweep (2d8+15), Whirlwind Attack

Spell-like Abilities (CL 35th)
3/day—*eagle's splendor*, *touch of idiocy*
1/day—*banishment* (DC 25), *detect animals or plants*

Abilities Str 31, Dex 13, Con 23, Int 26, Wis 27, Cha 26

SQ astral familiarity, detect extraplanar

Feats Ability Focus (dismissal breath), Cleave, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Multiattack, Power Attack, Snatch, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (bite), Whirlwind Attack

Skills Bluff +46, Concentration +44, Diplomacy +50, Escape Artist +39, Intimidate +48, Knowledge (arcane) +46, Knowledge (religion) +46, Knowledge (the planes) +46, Listen +46, Search +46, Sense Motive +46, Spellcraft +48 (+50 to decipher scrolls), Spot +46, Use Magic Device +46 (+48 on scrolls)

Breath Weapon (Su): 140 ft. line, *dismissal*, Will DC 33 negates; or 70 ft. cone, 18d6 damage, Reflex DC 33 half

chole dragon

Dragon (Extraplanar)

Environment: The Infinite Layers of the Abyss

Organization: Solitary (1 dragon, any age) or clutch (1d6+1 wyrmlings or very young).

Challenge Rating: Wyrmling 4; very young 5; young 7; juvenile 9; young adult 12; adult 14; mature adult 16; old 18; very old 20; ancient 21; wyrm 23; great wyrm 25

Treasure: Triple standard

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: Wyrmling 7–8 HD; very young 10–11 HD; young 13–14 HD; juvenile 16–17 HD; young adult 19–20 HD; adult 22–23 HD; mature adult 25–26 HD; old 28–29 HD; very old 31–32 HD; ancient 34–35 HD; wyrm 37–38 HD; great wyrm 40+ HD

Level Adjustment: Wyrmling +4; very young +6; young +8; others —

The wingless dragon has a wide, squat body covered in drab violet scales that ripple and drip a thick black ichor. A number of long tentacles, randomly spaced about the creature, writhe menacingly. Its twisted maw appears to hold teeth of varying lengths, and numerous short proto-tentacles cover its head. The salty stench of burning metal hangs heavily in the air.

CHOLE DRAGONS BY AGE

Age	Size	Hit Dice (hp)	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	Base Attack/ Grapple	Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Breath Weapon (DC)	Frightful Presence DC
Wyrmling	M	6d12+12 (51)	13	10	15	12	13	12	+6/+7	+7	+7	+5	+6	1d2 (15)	14
Very young	L	9d12+27 (85)	15	10	17	12	13	14	+9/+15	+10	+9	+6	+7	1d2 (17)	16
Young	L	12d12+48 (126)	17	10	19	14	15	16	+12/+19	+14	+12	+8	+10	1d4 (20)	19
Juvenile	L	15d12+75 (172)	19	10	21	14	15	18	+15/+22	+17	+14	+9	+12	1d6 (22)	21
Young adult	H	18d12+108 (225)	23	10	23	16	17	20	+18/+32	+22	+17	+11	+14	1d6 (25)	24
Adult	H	21d12+147 (283)	27	10	25	16	17	22	+21/+37	+27	+19	+12	+15	1d8 (27)	26
Mature adult	H	24d12+192 (348)	29	10	27	18	19	24	+24/+41	+31	+22	+14	+18	1d10 (30)	29
Old	G	27d12+243 (418)	31	10	29	18	19	26	+27/+49	+31	+24	+15	+19	1d10 (32)	31
Very old	G	30d12+300 (495)	33	10	31	20	21	28	+30/+53	+37	+27	+17	+22	2d6 (35)	34
Ancient	G	33d12+396 (610)	35	10	35	22	21	30	+33/+57	+41	+30	+18	+23	2d6 (38)	36
Wyrm	G	36d12+504 (738)	39	10	39	24	23	32	+36/+62	+46	+34	+20	+26	3d6 (42)	39
Great wyrm	C	39d12+624 (877)	43	10	43	26	23	34	+39/+71	+47	+37	+21	+27	4d6 (45)	41

Those who visit the 518th layer of the Abyss—the nesting grounds, say the sages, of chole dragons—share a singular trait upon their return: madness. In the infinite variables of their insane ramblings they all cry out with untellable dread the word "Melantholep" in their most fevered dreams. Whether the name of some unknown demon prince or the given title of the layer, none but the chole dragons can say. And none of them speak.

Whatever secret their hard-to-reach home layer holds they do not reveal. Their bodies, however, might present clues. Every chole dragon has—somewhere on its body—softly glowing runes of the Abyssal tongue. Concerned dragons and the sages of other races theorize that the runes on chole dragons could reveal some tangible clue as to the nature of their home... if only enough chole dragon scales could be recovered.

The number of runes on a chole dragon equals the number of tentacles it possesses—but neither of these measures the dragon's age or overall prowess. Strangely, despite the Abyss's unrelenting chaos, a chole dragon always has one of four set numbers of tentacles: four, seven, nine, or thirteen. Sages continue to debate the meaning of these numbers.

combat

Chole dragons embody the chaotic hate of the Abyss. They attack any moving creature on sight, from lowliest mane to greatest demon prince. Relentless beings of destruction, chole dragons never flee or show mercy. Because they lack wings, chole dragons do not gain wing attacks.

Breath Weapon (Su): A chole dragon has one type of breath weapon, a cone of poisonous insanity vapors. All within the area of effect suffer the listed amount of Wisdom and Charisma damage on failed Fortitude saves. As with normal poisons, another save against the same DC is required a minute later to avoid suffering the same Wisdom and Charisma damage again.

Tentacles (Ex): A chole dragon always has four, seven, nine, or thirteen tentacles, determined at random. This number is not related to its age category or size. Regardless of the number, only two of the tentacles are under the dragon's control, while the others writhe and squirm constantly. As a result, a chole dragon can only make two tentacle attacks per round. A chole dragon has poor command of its tentacles, and can only designate which creatures the tentacles should not attack (although it rarely bothers to do this). The tentacles attack up to two random opponents each round. The size of the chole dragon determines how much damage its tentacles deal and their reach.

Size	Damage	Reach
Medium	1d4	10 feet
Large	1d6	15 feet
Huge	1d8	20 feet
Gargantuan	2d6	30 feet
Colossal	2d8	40 feet

In addition, the number of tentacles the chole dragon possesses determines the type of damage its tentacles deal. Razor-sharp bony ridges cover all of a four-tentacled chole dragon's tentacles, causing it to deal slashing damage. Needlelike spikes protrude from all of a seven-tentacled chole dragon's tentacles, causing it to deal piercing damage. A mixture of bony ridges and spikes cover all of a nine-tentacled chole dragon's tentacles, causing it to deal both piercing and slashing damage. All of the tentacles of a thirteen-tentacled chole dragon end in thick, pulpy tumors, causing them to deal bludgeoning damage.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): The chole dragon's spell-like abilities depend on its number of tentacles.

Four tentacles: 3/day—*fly* (adult and older), *touch of idiocy* (old and older); 1/day—*blasphemy* (ancient and older), *magic circle against law* (wyrmling and older), *Mordenkainen's disjunction* (great wyrm).

Seven tentacles: 3/day—*darkness* (old and older), *slow* (adult and older); 1/day—*dominate monster* (great wyrm), *fly* (wyrmling and older), *word of chaos* (ancient and older).

Nine tentacles: 3/day—*levitate* (old and older), *fireball* (adult and older); 1/day—*dispel magic* (wyrmling and older), *repulsion* (ancient and older), *weird* (great wyrm).

Thirteen tentacles: 3/day—*magic circle against good* (adult and older), *mirror image* (old and older); 1/day—*destruction* (ancient and older), *haste* (wyrmling and older), *time stop* (great wyrm).

Mute (Ex): Chole dragons do not and cannot speak or make any sort of vocalization. The reason for this remains a mystery.

Runes (Ex): A chole dragon has, somewhere on its body, a number of softly glowing runes equal to the number of its tentacles. The runes do not provide enough light to see by. They change placement on the dragon at random, sometimes appearing large and in a prominent location, and other times hiding amid the folds of the creature's hide. Each rune is a symbol in the Abyssal tongue, but all of the runes together on a particular chole dragon never form a known word.

JUVENILE SEVEN-TENTACLED CR 9 CHOLE DRAGON

CE Large dragon (extraplanar)

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvison 120 ft., keen senses; Listen +20, Spot +20

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CHOLE DRAGON ABILITIES BY AGE

Age	Speed	Initiative	AC	Special Abilities	SR
Wyrmling	40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 60 ft.	+0	13 (+3 natural) touch 10, flat-footed 13	Spell-like ability, tentacles	—
Very young	40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 60 ft.	+0	13 (–1 size, +4 natural) touch 9, flat-footed 13	Fast healing 5	—
Young	40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 60 ft.	+0	15 (–1 size, +6 natural) touch 9, flat-footed 15	DR 5/lawful	—
Juvenile	40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 60 ft.	+0	16 (–1 size, +7 natural) touch 9, flat-footed 16		—
Young adult	40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 60 ft.	+0	17 (–2 size, +9 natural) touch 8, flat-footed 17	DR 10/lawful	19
Adult	40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 60 ft.	+0	18 (–2 size, +10 natural) touch 8, flat-footed 18	Spell-like ability	21
Mature adult	40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 60 ft.	+0	20 (–2 size, +12 natural) touch 8, flat-footed 20	DR 15/lawful, fast healing 10	22
Old	40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 90 ft.	+0	19 (–4 size, +13 natural) touch 6, flat-footed 19	Spell-like ability	24
Very old	40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 90 ft.	+0	21 (–4 size, +15 natural) touch 6, flat-footed 21	DR 20/lawful	25
Ancient	40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 90 ft.	+0	22 (–4 size, +16 natural) touch 6, flat-footed 22	Fast healing 15, spell-like ability	27
Wyrm	40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 90 ft.	+0	24 (–4 size, +18 natural) touch 6, flat-footed 24	DR 20/lawful and 5/—	28
Great wyrm	40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 90 ft.	+0	21 (–8 size, +19 natural) touch 2, flat-footed 21	Spell-like ability	30

Aura Frightful presence (120 ft. radius, DC 21)
Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic

AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16
hp 172 (15 HD); fast healing 5; **DR** 10/lawful
Immune paralysis, sleep
Fort +14, **Ref** +9, **Will** +12

Spd 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 40 ft., swim 60 ft.
Melee bite +18 (2d6+4) and
2 claws +15 (1d8+2) and
2 tentacles +15 (1d6+2) and
tail slap +15 (1d8+6)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite, 15 ft. with tentacle)
Base Atk +15; **Grp** +22
Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack
Special Actions breath weapon
Spell-like Abilities (CL 15th)
3/day—*fly*

Abilities Str 19, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 18
SQ mute, runes, tentacles (seven)
Feats Cleave, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Track, Weapon Focus (bite)
Skills Hide +14, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (the planes) +20, Listen +20, Move Silently +18, Search +20, Spot +20, Survival +20 (+22 on other planes, +22 when following tracks)

Breath Weapon (Su): 40 ft. cone, poison gas, Fortitude DC 22, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Wis and 1d6 Cha.

elysian dragon

Dragon (Extraplanar)
Environment: The Blessed Fields of Elysium
Organization: Solitary (1 dragon, any age), clutch (2d4+1 wyrmlings, very young, young, or juveniles), or family (2d2 mature adults and 2d4+1 offspring)
Challenge Rating: Wyrmling 3; very young 4; young 6; juvenile 8; young adult 10; adult 12; mature adult 14; old 16; very old 18; ancient 19; wyrm 20; great wyrm 22
Treasure: Half standard
Alignment: Always neutral good
Advancement: Wyrmling 5–6 HD; very young 8–9 HD; young 11–12 HD; juvenile 14–15 HD; young adult 17–18 HD; adult 20–21 HD; mature adult 23–24 HD; old 26–27 HD; very old 29–30 HD; ancient 32–33 HD; wyrm 35–36 HD; great wyrm 38+ HD
Level Adjustment: Wyrmling +4; very young +5; young +7; others —

The dragon has a wide, squat body and appears obese. Extrusions of adipose-rich flesh push out the dragon's scales, giving it a rough, unkempt look. A spiny frill that doubles the dragon's height runs from the top of its head to near the beginning of its short, thick tail. The stink of fermenting grain hangs thick in the air.

ELYSIAN DRAGONS BY AGE

Age	Size	Hit Dice (hp)	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	Base Attack/ Grapple	Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Breath Weapon (DC)	Frightful Presence DC
Wyrmling	T	4d12+4 (30)	11	10	13	10	11	10	+4/–4	+6	+5	+4	+4	1d6 (13)	—
Very young	S	7d12+7 (52)	13	10	13	10	11	10	+7/+4	+9	+6	+5	+5	2d6 (14)	—
Young	M	10d12+20 (85)	15	10	15	12	11	12	+10/+13	+13	+9	+7	+7	3d6 (17)	—
Juvenile	M	13d12+26 (110)	19	10	15	12	13	12	+13/+17	+17	+10	+8	+9	4d6 (18)	—
Young adult	L	16d12+48 (152)	21	10	17	14	15	12	+16/+25	+20	+13	+10	+12	5d6 (21)	19
Adult	L	19d12+76 (199)	21	10	19	14	15	14	+19/+28	+23	+15	+11	+13	6d6 (23)	21
Mature adult	H	22d12+110 (253)	25	10	21	16	17	14	+22/+37	+27	+18	+13	+16	7d6 (26)	23
Old	H	25d12+125 (287)	27	10	21	16	17	16	+25/+41	+31	+19	+14	+17	8d6 (27)	25
Very old	H	28d12+168 (350)	29	10	23	18	17	16	+28/+45	+35	+22	+16	+19	9d6 (30)	27
Ancient	H	31d12+186 (387)	31	10	23	18	17	18	+31/+49	+39	+23	+17	+20	10d6 (31)	29
Wyrm	G	34d12+238 (459)	35	10	25	20	19	18	+34/+58	+42	+26	+19	+23	11d6 (34)	31

Jolly and good-natured to an almost ridiculous extreme, Elysian dragons enjoy little more than bacchanalian feasts and lust-fueled festivals. They drink, eat, and enjoy themselves to excess. Considered by most other true dragons as irresponsible and overly prolific, Elysian dragons breed at an alarmingly fast rate (for dragons) and sire more half-dragons than all other planar dragon kinds combined. Elysian dragons receive such criticism as light-hearted jest and offer slurred rebuttals in kind.

Although they claim themselves protectors of the tranquil peace that pervades Elysium, Elysian dragons often seem intent only on ensuring they—and those around them—have as many long enjoyable days as possible. From their point of view, happiness and goodness are inexorably linked, and nothing promotes happiness better than inebriation and other physical pleasures. Despite their excellent draconic metabolisms, Elysian dragons tend to overeat and overdrink themselves into obesity.

The rare Elysian dragon that doesn't immediately spend, drink, or eat any new treasure that might otherwise go into its hoard occasionally amasses a small but respectable collection of treasures... until the next time it hosts a party. Elysian dragons tend to lair in or near towns, shrinking themselves when necessary in order to fit into buildings.

ELYSIAN DRAGON ABILITIES BY AGE

Age	Speed	Initiative	AC	Special Abilities	SR
Wyrmling	20 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (good)	+0	16 (+2 size, +4 natural) touch 12, flat-footed 16	Immunities	—
Very young	30 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 100 ft. (average)	+0	18 (+1 size, +7 natural) touch 11, flat-footed 18	*Create food and drink*	—
Young	40 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 100 ft. (average)	+0	20 (+10 natural) touch 10, flat-footed 20	DR 5/piercing or slashing	—
Juvenile	40 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 100 ft. (average)	+0	23 (+13 natural) touch 10, flat-footed 23	*Calm emotions*	—
Young adult	40 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	25 (–1 size, +16 natural) touch 9, flat-footed 25	Shrink, *Tasha's hideous laughter*	18
Adult	40 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	28 (–1 size, +19 natural) touch 9, flat-footed 28	DR 5/unholy and (piercing or slashing)	20
Mature adult	40 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	30 (–2 size, +22 natural) touch 8, flat-footed 30	*Baleful polymorph*	21
Old	40 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	33 (–2 size, +25 natural) touch 8, flat-footed 33	DR 10/unholy and (piercing or slashing)	23
Very old	40 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	36 (–2 size, +28 natural) touch 8, flat-footed 36		24
Ancient	40 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	39 (–2 size, +31 natural) touch 8, flat-footed 39	DR 15/unholy and (piercing or slashing)	26
Wyrm	40 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy)	+0	40 (–4 size, +34 natural) touch 6, flat-footed 40	*Dominate monster*	27
Great wyrm	40 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy)	+0	43 (–4 size, +37 natural) touch 6, flat-footed 43	DR 20/unholy and (piercing or slashing)	29

combat

If attacked or otherwise pressed into combat, an Elysian dragon always seems offended that someone would attempt to ruin its party. When it finally decides to defend itself, the Elysian dragon attempts to end a combat as quickly—and with as little bloodshed—as possible. Its breath weapon and array of spell-like abilities help it in this cause. Unbreakably upbeat, an Elysian dragon in combat makes jokes and speaks conversationally with its opponents, usually in an attempt to bring them around to its side but occasionally merely out of drunkenness.

Breath Weapon (Su): An Elysian dragon has two kinds of breath weapons, a line of sonic energy and a cone of inebriation gas. Creatures caught in the line of sonic energy receive a Reflex save for half damage.

Creatures within the cone of inebriating gas must succeed on a Fortitude save or be sickened for 10 minutes per age category of the dragon. While under this sickened effect, affected creatures become upbeat and happy, gaining a +1 bonus on saves versus fear effects. Creatures immune to poison are immune to this breath weapon. Some say that the release of the inebriation gas sounds suspiciously like a belch.

Immunities (Ex): An Elysian dragon is immune to poison and to sonic damage.

Shrink (Su): At will, an Elysian dragon can reduce its body size by up to three size categories (though no smaller than Fine). The Elysian dragon retains its shape; it is just a smaller version of itself. The change in size lasts as long as the dragon wishes. Changing size (either shrinking or returning to its normal size) takes 1 round per size category of change. An Elysian dragon's statistics do not change while in a smaller form, with the following exceptions: The damage and type of natural attacks changes to match its new size. The area of effect for its breath weapon changes to match its new size.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): At will—*create food and drink* (very young or older), *Tasha's hideous laughter* (young adult or older); 3/day—*baleful polymorph* (mature adult or older), *calm emotions* (juvenile or older), *dominate monster* (wyrm or older).

OLD ELYSIAN DRAGON **CR 16**

NG Huge dragon (extraplanar)

Init +0; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvison 120 ft., keen senses; Listen +31, Spot +31

Aura Frightful presence (240 ft. radius, DC 25)

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Sylvan

AC 33, touch 8, flat-footed 33

hp 287 (25 HD); **DR** 10/unholy and (slashing or piercing)

Immune paralysis, poison, sleep, sonic

Fort +21, **Ref** +14, **Will** +19

Spd 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)

Melee bite +31 (2d8+8) and
2 claws +29 (2d6+4) and
2 wings +29 (1d8+4) and

tail slap +29 (2d6+12)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)
Base Atk +25; **Grp** +41
Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack, Snatch
Special Actions breath weapon, crush (2d8+12)
Spell-like Abilities (CL 25th)
At will—*create food and drink, Tasha's hideous laugher* (DC 15)
3/day—*baleful polymorph* (DC 18), *calm emotions* (DC 15), quickened *Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 15)

Abilities Str 27, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 16
SQ shrink
Feats Cleave, Great Fortitude, Hover, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*Tasha's hideous laugher*), Snatch, Wingover
Skills Bluff +31, Diplomacy +33, Intimidate +35, Knowledge (the planes) +31, Listen +31, Search +31, Sense Motive +31, Spot +31, Use Magic Device +31

Breath Weapon (Su): 100 ft. line, 8d6 sonic damage, Reflex DC 27 half; or 50 ft. cone, sickened for 80 minutes, Fortitude DC 27 negates

gloom dragon

Dragon (Extraplanar)
Environment: The Gray Waste of Hades
Organization: Solitary (1 dragon, any age), clutch (1d4+1 wyrmlings), or family (pair of mature adults and 1d4+1 offspring)
Challenge Rating: Wyrmling 3; very young 4; young 5; juvenile 7; young adult 9; adult 11; mature adult 14; old 16; very old 17; ancient 18; wyrm 20; great wyrm 22
Treasure: Triple standard
Alignment: Always neutral evil
Advancement: Wyrmling 5–6 HD; very young 8–9 HD; young 11–12 HD; juvenile 14–15 HD; young adult 17–18 HD; adult 20–21 HD; mature adult 23–24 HD; old 26–27 HD; very old 29–30 HD; ancient 32–33 HD; wyrm 35–36 HD; great wyrm 38+ HD
Level Adjustment: Wyrmling +4; very young +5; young +6; juvenile +6; others —

The dragon looks gaunt and skeletal, and has a beaklike snout resembling that of a vulture. Its tightly drawn hide of rough, oft-cracked scales alternates in uneven patterns between white and black. A line of rough plates runs down its spine, each in the shape of a battered and worn headstone. Each headstone plate bears what looks like writing. A thin green-gray mist—the color of its eyes—swirls about the knees of the beast.

Although they appear undead on first glance, gloom dragons merely represent the apathetic loss of hope prevalent in Hades. The tombstonelike plates that grow from their spines bear the epitaphs of their victims, each consumed foe adding another plate to the dragon's frill.

Much like the scavengers their beaky snouts recall, gloom dragons roam the uppermost layer of Hades looking for carrion on which to feast. Craven loners, gloom dragons prefer to allow other creatures to kill their meals for them. As residents of the plane most often used as a battlefield for the eternal Blood War, gloom dragons rarely need to travel far to find suitable fare.

Gloom dragons frequently make their lairs in caves along the River Styx. Since most items lose their luster in Hades, gloom dragons focus their draconic lust for treasure on magic items—especially artifacts.

combat

A gloom dragon prefers to avoid combat whenever possible and flees whenever a creature offers any kind of resistance to being eaten. If driven back in this manner, the gloom dragon tries to let its aura of gloom weaken

GLOOM DRAGONS BY AGE

Age	Size	Hit Dice (hp)	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	Base Attack/ Grapple	Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Breath Weapon (DC)	Frightful Presence DC
Wyrmling	T	4d12+4 (30)	11	10	13	14	13	16	+4/–4	+6	+5	+4	+5	1d6+1 (13)	15
Very young	S	7d12+7 (52)	13	10	13	14	13	16	+7/+4	+9	+6	+5	+6	1d6+2 (14)	16
Young	M	10d12+20 (85)	15	10	15	16	15	18	+10/+12	+12	+9	+7	+9	1d6+3 (17)	19
Juvenile	M	13d12+26 (110)	17	10	15	18	15	20	+13/+16	+16	+10	+8	+10	1d6+4 (18)	21
Young adult	L	16d12+48 (152)	19	10	17	18	17	20	+16/+24	+19	+13	+10	+13	1d6+5 (21)	23
Adult	L	19d12+76 (199)	23	10	19	20	17	22	+19/+29	+24	+15	+11	+14	1d6+6 (23)	25
Mature adult	H	22d12+110 (253)	27	10	21	20	19	22	+22/+38	+28	+18	+13	+17	1d6+7 (26)	27
Old	H	25d12+125 (287)	29	10	21	22	19	26	+25/+42	+32	+19	+14	+18	1d6+8 (27)	30
Very old	H	28d12+168 (350)	31	10	23	24	21	28	+28/+46	+36	+22	+16	+21	1d6+9 (30)	33
Ancient	H	31d12+186 (387)	33	10	23	26	21	30	+31/+50	+40	+23	+17	+22	1d6+10 (31)	35
Wyrm	G	34d12+238 (459)	35	10	25	28	23	32	+34/+58	+42	+26	+19	+25	1d6+11 (34)	38
Great wyrm	G	37d12+296 (536)	37	10	27	30	23	34	+37/+62	+46	+27	+20	+26	1d6+12 (36)	40

GLOOM DRAGON ABILITIES BY AGE

Age	Speed	Initiative	AC	Special Abilities	SR
Wyrmling	20 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 100 ft. (good)	+0	17 (+2 size, +5 natural) touch 12, flat-footed 17	Aura of gloom, eternal consumption, wasting bite	12
Very young	30 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (good)	+0	19 (+1 size, +8 natural) touch 11, flat-footed 19		14
Young	30 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (average)	+0	21 (+11 natural) touch 10, flat-footed 21	*Deep slumber*	15
Juvenile	30 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (average)	+0	24 (+14 natural) touch 10, flat-footed 24		17
Young adult	30 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (average)	+0	26 (–1 size, +17 natural) touch 9, flat-footed 26		18
Adult	30 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (average)	+0	29 (–1 size, +20 natural) touch 9, flat-footed 29	DR 5/holy	20
Mature adult	40 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	31 (–2 size, +23 natural) touch 8, flat-footed 31	*Hold monster*	21
Old	40 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	34 (–2 size, +26 natural) touch 8, flat-footed 34	DR 10/holy	23
Very old	40 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	37 (–2 size, +29 natural) touch 8, flat-footed 37	*Hold person, mass*	24
Ancient	40 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	40 (–2 size, +32 natural) touch 8, flat-footed 40	DR 15/holy	26
Wyrm	40 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy)	+0	41 (–4 size, +35 natural) touch 6, flat-footed 41	*Blasphemy*	27
Great wyrm	40 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy)	+0	44 (–4 size, +38 natural) touch 6, flat-footed 44	DR 20/holy	29

its opponents before it attempts using its spell-like abilities or breath weapon to immobilize its potential meal. Only when defending is lair or its young does a gloom dragon stand its ground.

Aura of Gloom (Su): A green-gray mist constantly roils around a gloom dragon. The mist emanates from the dragon at a distance of 5 feet per age category. Any living creature who ends its turn inside the mist must succeed at a Will save (DC equal to the dragon's breath weapon DC) or become shaken for 1 round per age category. Leaving the mist does not remove the shaken effect before the end of its duration. This is a fear effect.

Breath Weapon (Su): The gloom dragon has one type of breath weapon, a cone of apathy gas. Creatures caught in the cone must succeed at Will saves or succumb to a deep and lasting apathy for 1d6 rounds plus 1 round per age category of the dragon. Apathetic creatures are helpless, take no actions, and do not defend themselves. Damage dealt to an apathetic creature gives it another save (at the same DC) to shake off the apathy.

Eternal Consumption (Su): Whenever a gloom dragon eats a dead creature no larger than two size categories smaller than itself a new tombstone plate grows on the gloom dragon's back. This requires 10 rounds for a creature two size categories smaller than the gloom dragon –4 rounds per size category smaller than that (minimum 1 round). The tombstone plate records the consumed creature's name (if any), date and place of birth, and date and place of death. Only a carefully worded *wish* or *miracle*, followed by a *resurrection*, can restore a consumed creature to life—and only then after the gloom dragon is slain.

Wasting Bite (Su): In addition to taking the normal bite damage, any creature hit by a gloom dragon's bite attack must succeed on a Fortitude save or contract gray wasting (DC 20 + Constitution modifier). Gray wasting has an incubation of 1 day and deals 1d4 points of Charisma drain. Gloom dragons are immune to the gray wasting disease.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): 3/day—*deep slumber* (young or older), *mass hold person* (very old or older); 1/day—*blasphemy* (wyrm or older); *hold monster* (mature adult or older).

ADULT GLOOM DRAGON **CR 11**

NE Large dragon (extraplanar)

Init +0; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvison 120 ft., keen senses; Listen +25, Spot +25

Aura aura of gloom (30 ft. radius, DC 23); frightful presence (180 ft. radius, DC 25)

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal

AC 29, touch 9, flat-footed 29

hp 199 (19 HD); **DR** 5/holy

Immune paralysis, sleep

Fort +21, **Ref** +14, **Will** +19

Spd 30 ft. (6 squares), burrow 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (average)

Melee bite +24 (2d6+6 plus disease) and 2 claws +22 (1d8+3) and 2 wings +22 (1d6+3) and tail slap +22 (1d8+9)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)

Base Atk +19; **Grp** +29

Atk Options Cleave, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Snatch

Special Actions breath weapon, Flyby Attack

Spell-like Abilities (CL 19th) 3/day—*deep slumber* (DC 19)

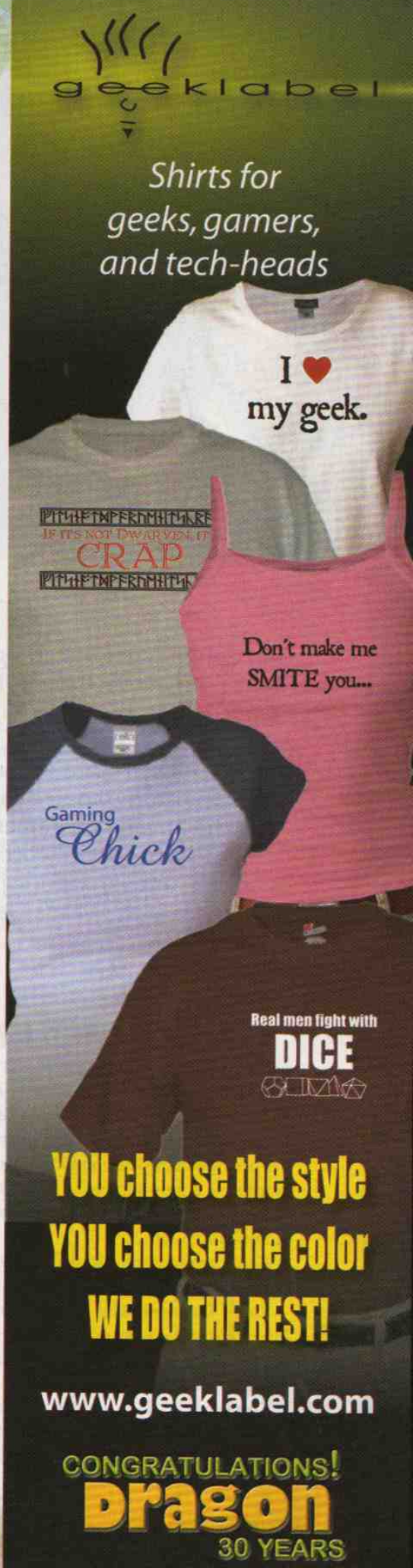
Abilities Str 23, Dex 10, Con 19, Int 20, Wis 17, Cha 22

SQ eternal consumption, wasting bite

Feats Cleave, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Sunder, Multiattack, Power Attack, Snatch

Skills Bluff +28, Diplomacy +32, Intimidate +30, Knowledge (history) +27, Knowledge (the planes) +27, Knowledge (religion) +27, Listen +25, Search +27, Sense Motive +25, Spot +25, Use Magic Device +28

Breath Weapon (Su): 40 ft. cone, apathetic gas (sleep 1d6+6 rounds), Will DC 25 negates



Gen Con Indy 2006 PREVIEW

Gen Con Indy 2006 is going to be packed with all kinds of crunchy gaming goodness! We're bringing back events that were all the rage last year, like the insanely popular True Dungeon and the finely tuned, geo-political immersion, National Security Decision Making Game. Puzzle over a new convention-spanning conundrum by Mike Selinker and his brilliant team of puzzle creators. Also, expect all the staple events such as the auction, costume contest, and art show.

But the fun and excitement only starts there!

Gen Con is not only bringing you tons of new events, we're reinventing several classics. Curious? Here's just a sampling of programs and events, new and old, coming up at this year's Gen Con Indy.

ANIME & EGAMES

The most visible change at this year's Gen Con Indy might be our expanded anime programming track. It has been a part of Gen Con for a long time now, but this year anime is growing beyond the video rooms we've had in the past to encompass all the events you'd find at a full anime convention.

Here's a preview of what you can expect to find at this year's anime area:

Video Premiers: The video rooms you know and love are still there, so make sure to stop in and check out the newest and greatest anime, along with lots of old favorites.

Cosplay: All those cosplay fans out there can get involved with the Gen Con Costume Contest, which has a special anime category this year. Show your love for your favorite anime characters and win fabulous cash prizes while you're at it!

Artists' Alley: Amateur artists and other creators gather together as a community in our Artists' Alley, found in the anime area. Stop by and see what your fellow fans have created. If you're interested in getting a space yourself, contact us and let us know.

Guests: Gen Con welcomes a number of industry representatives, artists, and voice actors as guests this year, many of whom you can meet as they host panels and events to share their experiences and points of view.

Karaoke: You know you always wanted to belt out that anime tune that's been stuck in your head and now's your chance. Come and pick an anime or J-pop song from our selection and get singing! Knowledge of Japanese is optional—only excitement and a voice is required.

Industry and Fan Panels: Ask the companies that release your favorite anime titles all the questions you've kept bottled up. Also expect panels hosted by your fellow fans and interactive events like the popular Hentai Dubbing event from Gen Con So Cal.

Manga Library: When all the rush of Gen Con is just too much for you, come by the quiet manga library to take a break and check out our selection of new releases and old classics.

Anime Badge: The best part of it all is that we're offering a special discounted anime badge this year that provides limited access to only the anime area and exhibit hall—no games or other events—it's a great way to check out our new anime programming. If you have any friends who are into anime and haven't taken the plunge into Gen Con, let them know that now's the time to come and party with the rest of us.

eGames: Anime's not the only thing growing at this year's Gen Con Indy. Our eGames arena is also taking the next evolutionary step. We have more consoles this year: Playstation 2s, Gamecubes, and shiny new Xbox 360s. A more robust tournament schedule should also give everyone the chance to throw down and show off their skills. There's also still plenty of time to stop in and play whatever you want from our gaming library. Show us your inner rocker with *Guitar Hero*, cure your disco fever with *Dance Dance Revolution*, roll over the opposition with *Katamari Damacy*, be the cutest little fighter in *Super Smash Brothers Melee*, fight to the finish in *Dead or Alive 4*, and blow away your opponents in *Halo 2*.

If you need your MMO fix, the LAN area offers all the essentials with *World of Warcraft*, *City of Heroes*, and *Dungeons & Dragons Online*. Log in, calm your shakes, and then stick around for the other PC events like *Halflife: Counterstrike* and real-time strategy tournaments.

Another exciting addition to our eGames arena is our handheld gaming organized play. Make sure to bring your PSP and Nintendo DS. We're bringing our mobile gaming lounge from So Cal and it's even bigger and better. You can hang out, try the newest mobile games (even if you don't have a console of your own), and challenge other players. With our weekend-long mobile gaming tournaments, you can take on other players anytime, anywhere during the convention.

If you play console or computer games, make sure to check out the eGames arena, located in the convention center, right across from the Exhibit Hall.

GEN CON FILM FEST

The film fest at Gen Con receives a major face-lift this year. The rules have been revised, streamlined, and are available online now! Submissions are now broken into four categories:

Shorts: Any narrative story shorter than 45 minutes.

Feature-length films: A narrative film 45 minutes or longer.

Documentaries: Nonfiction films.

Non-competition: Winners from previous years or films made by Gen Con employees.

Each category (except non-competition) is considered by a jury of Gen Con judges for a number of awards, as well as voted upon by you, the fans, for the "audience choice" award.

In addition to the contest, Gen Con also features screenings of fan-favorite and classic genre films.

Some might be entrants into film contests of the past, while others might be brand new gems. Also expect old classics as much a part of gamer culture as the games we play. New or old, each is worth checking out. Full information on the films and schedules will be posted on our web site before the show.

GEN CON ENTERTAINMENT

This year, wandering entertainers, musical groups, and hilarious characters promise to make their presence felt. We're adding lots of musical groups to the line up, so expect to hear everything from bawdy pirate shanties to Celtic tunes, folk songs to rock and roll. It's all for your enjoyment and guaranteed to get you laughing and tapping your toes—possibly at the same time!

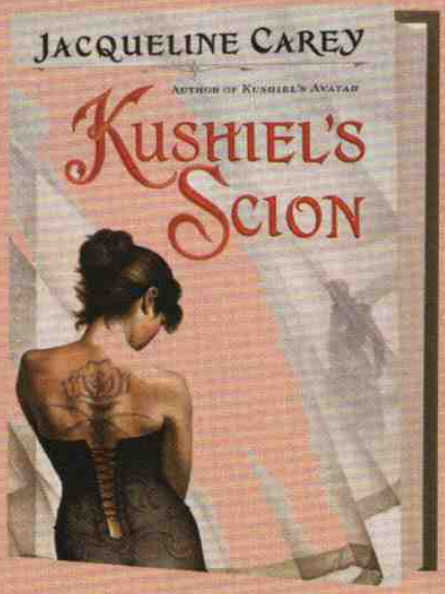
If that wasn't enough, we're introducing Friday Night Live, a night of comedy, music, improv, and more. Friday Night Live is a venue where musicians, comedians, singers, improv groups, and other entertainers perform for your delight. Each has its own performance space and time, so you can pick and choose what interests you and plan accordingly. You'll have to see it to believe it.

The Gen Con Play returns to Indy this year, back by popular demand. The Gen Con Theatre Company brings back all your favorite characters for a brand new misadventure.

MINIATURES EVENTS

Of course, you can't forget all the miniature hobby events, workshops, and seminars, including favorites like Paint & Take, Speed Painting, and the Miniatures Painting Competition. Also, don't forget the Aces V: Charity Speed Paint and Auction. This year we're adding special guests to the line-up as well as demonstrations by some of the industry's best known painters, terrain makers, and sculptors. Be sure to stop by and watch these talented professionals at work.

The author of *Kushiel's Avatar* is back with a stunning new trilogy.



From JACQUELINE CAREY, the national bestselling, award-winning author of the Kushiel's Legacy trilogy, comes KUSHIEL'S SCION.

"Lush, sensuous...a savory feast for mind and heart."
—*Booklist* (starred review) on *Kushiel's Avatar*

"[It] will appeal to both fantasy lovers and fans of erotic romance."
—*Publishers Weekly* on *Kushiel's Avatar*

"Sensual and captivating. Once you pick it up you won't want to put it down." —Robert Jordan on *Kushiel's Chosen*

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ORGANIZED OFFERINGS

Between the RPGA, Wizards of the Coast, Upper Deck, and others, there are enough organized events to keep you gaming for the entire convention. If you're ready for the challenge, here's a preview of what's already waiting.

D&D OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP 2006

The D&D Open Championship is the oldest and largest competitive D&D tournament in the world. This year's meat-grinder adventure—set in EBERRON and using a cast of characters picked by D&D fans—challenges the world's best players as part of D&D's Year of Dragons celebration.

Times are for entry rounds. Semifinal rounds start Saturday at 1:00 PM and 6 PM. Finals are 8:00 AM Sunday.

Thursday—8 AM, 1 PM, 6 PM
Friday—8 AM, 1 PM, 6 PM
Saturday—8 AM (last chance entry round)

XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS LAUNCH

This Gen Con marks the official launch of the Xen'drik Expeditions campaign, where your character—a member of one of four factions—attempts to change the face of history and maybe even Xen'drik itself. Wizards of the Coast unleashes the first of the campaign's expedition adventures—*Well of Woe*.

Wizards of the Coast recommends you play this three-round adventure in consecutive order, and offers ticketing in block and individual order. The following times are the beginnings of blocks.

Thursday—8 AM and 1 PM
Friday—8 AM and 1 PM
Saturday—8 AM and 1 PM (last chance block)

ONE HUNDRED HOURS OF D&D ADVENTURES AND MORE

LIVING GREYHAWK cores and special, and Mark of Heroes adventures round out the RPGA D&D roleplaying offerings. But that's not all. Wizards of the Coast is also running D&D for Beginners, *Three-Dragon Ante* events, and daily tournaments for stacks of D&D swag!

LIVING GREYHAWK SPECIAL—*THE FORGOTTEN TEMPLE*

Thursday—8 AM, 1 PM, 6 PM
Friday—8 AM, 1 PM, 6 PM
Saturday—8 AM, 1 PM, 6 PM
Sunday—8 AM

MARK OF HEROES SPECIAL—*ONCE UPON A DEATH*

Thursday—8 AM, 1 PM, 6 PM
Friday—8 AM, 1 PM, 6 PM
Saturday—8 AM, 1 PM, 6 PM
Sunday—8 AM

LIST OF ACTIVITIES

Of course, Wizards of the Coast is planning loads of miniatures events. Here are some highlights!

$20,000 DREAMBLADE Release Championship
***DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures* Constructed Championship and Last Chance Qualifier**
***DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures* 200-point Constructed**
***DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures* 200-point Limited**
***DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures* Epic**
***DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures* 200-point Limited League**
***STAR WARS Miniatures* 100-point Constructed**
***STAR WARS Miniatures* 100-point Limited**
***STAR WARS Miniatures* Gen Con 100-point Limited League**
***AXIS & ALLIES* "D-Day" 100-point Constructed**
***AXIS & ALLIES* 100-point Constructed**
***AXIS & ALLIES* 100-point Limited**
***AXIS & ALLIES* 100-point Limited League**

For the entire weekend of Gen Con Indy 2006, Wizards of the Coast will also be running "Win the Board" tournaments for their most popular Avalon Hill games!

A STACKED DECK

As always, Upper Deck Entertainment brings their best to Gen Con, including some new releases that are destined to be classics. Fans of *World of Warcraft* should be excited to discover the new *World of Warcraft* TCG, releasing this summer. If you're a fan, you'll need to check out the Upper Deck card gaming area. You'll undoubtedly be impressed!

Here's what you can expect from the Upper Deck area:

***World of Warcraft* Championships**
Shonen Jump's *Yu-Gi-Oh!* Championship
Featuring the release of a special Shonen Jump card.
Saturday & Sunday (Aug 12-13)
Pro Circuit Indianapolis
Thursday-Sunday (Aug 10-13)

WIDOWS WANTED!

Are you the spouse of a gamer widow? Does your significant other harangue you about leaving her at home while you head out to the best four days in gaming? Well, we have the answer. We have events and activities for your loved ones as well. We call it SPA: Activities for the Better Half, and we think your non-gamer partner will appreciate all the options we're lining up for her. Want to know more? Contact **events@gencon.com**, or check out our website **gencon.com**. Your better half should enjoy the best four days of gaming just as much as you do. Now we have the answer!

If you've never tried your hand at painting an orc in 5 minutes now you can have your chance with Speed Painting. If you're looking for a more relaxed atmosphere to try your hand at painting or would like some guidance by helpful instructors, check out the Paint & Take. Everything you need to bring out your inner artist is supplied, including minis and paint from top manufactures. When you're done, you even get to take your creation with you.

Want to learn how to make those incredible dioramas or how to sculpt your own minis? Then be sure to check out the design workshops, each geared around miniature painting, sculpting, and diorama creation.

WIZARD'S WORKS

Wizards of the Coast always brings something fabulous to Gen Con, and this year is no different. The big news is the $20,000 DREAMBLADE Release Championship! What's DREAMBLADE? It's Wizards of the Coast's newest collectible miniatures game, and it's destined to be one of the most talked about events of the convention. Swing by the Wizards of the Coast booth and learn how to play, then throw together a horde of miniatures and win yourself a chest full of ducats. Designed by Jonathan Tweet of D&D and *Everway* fame, DREAMBLADE is a brilliant mix of strategy, tactics, speed, and fun! Whether you're a fan of collectible games, miniatures games, or strategy games, DREAMBLADE has something for you.

Also from Wizards of the Coast, expect some major competition on the collectable card game front as you participate in the MAGIC: THE GATHERING Legacy Championship and MAGIC: THE GATHERING Vintage Championship. Hungry for more? You'll also find the DUEL MASTERS Gen Con Championship to whet even the most demanding appetite.

...AND SO MUCH MORE!

Gen Con is excited to bring back the Gen Con Poker Tournament, run by the great guys from The Gamestation. Expect high-stakes events, including Texas Hold 'Em tournaments and championship! If it's anything like last year, The Gamestation will have some spectacular prizes waiting in store for the lucky few who make it to the finals!

Earlier this year, we posted "The Next Great Gen Con Event" contest. We were looking for the next large-scale immersive event, similar in scope to Gamer Olympics, Gamer Abuse, or True Dungeon. In the end, we received more than one hundred entries. But only one can win. What event will become "The Next Great Gen Con Event?" You'll have to make it to Gen Con Indy 2006 to find out!

Gen Con So Cal 2005 brought us some events we imported to Indy. Events such as the Segway Challenge, where you learn to ride a Segway and then race other attendees through an obstacle course. You'll also find some new favorites such as the Gamer Olympics or the Training Grounds, a place for young gamers to learn new games.

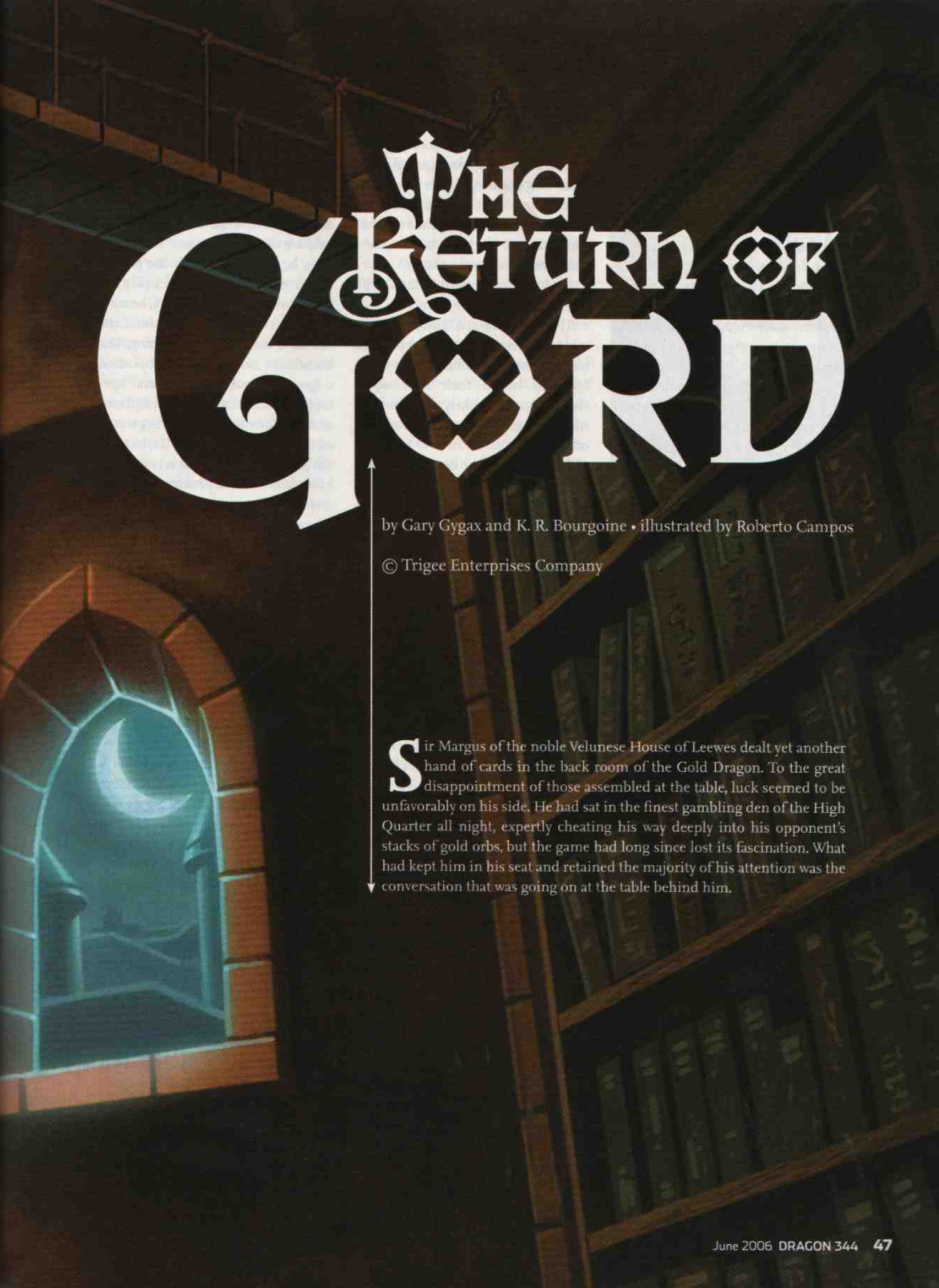
This doesn't include the fabulous events everyone else has in store. WizKids is bringing their latest game, the *Battlestar Galactica* CCG! Love the new series? Well, this card game will keep you coming back for more (which is a good thing, since it's collectible).

If you're a minis fan, you'll find *AXIS & ALLIES, Warmachine, LEGO, Confrontation, Warhammer,* STAR WARS, and a host of other wonderfully painted figures and games in our miniatures arena.

If LARPing is your thing, you'll be happy to read that Chaosium is back and better than ever with their *Call of Cthulhu* LARP. You'll also find a significant *Vampire* and *Werewolf* presence from White Wolf, as well as some new LARPs making their first appearances.

As for board games, train games, dice games, resource management games, and so many others that it would take pages to list them, all can be found in Gen Con's board game room, brought to you by GB7 and many other companies.

There's so much to choose from, no matter what your gaming preference might be, that you're sure to find something to do. Badge registration has already begun and event registration begins on May 1st, 2006. Reserve your games early as they sell out quickly, and keep checking **gencon.com** for more information. So buy that 4-day pass, get online, download the event schedule and get ready for the best four days in gaming!



The Return of Gord

by Gary Gygax and K. R. Bourgoine • illustrated by Roberto Campos

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Sir Margus of the noble Velunese House of Leewes dealt yet another hand of cards in the back room of the Gold Dragon. To the great disappointment of those assembled at the table, luck seemed to be unfavorably on his side. He had sat in the finest gambling den of the High Quarter all night, expertly cheating his way deeply into his opponent's stacks of gold orbs, but the game had long since lost its fascination. What had kept him in his seat and retained the majority of his attention was the conversation that was going on at the table behind him.

A captain of the watch, one the handsome young noble had never seen, appeared to have had more than his share of fine wine, and interesting and confidential information flowed freely from his lips as he attempted to win over a beautiful courtesan named Lorinda, who sat most languidly upon his lap. Sir Margus paid only half attention to the game at hand. He didn't want to miss a word the watch captain spoke. As his drunken hands ran over the courtesan's pale and slender thighs, the soldier explained that the Mirror Queen from the Valley of the Mage was coming to the city. Her mission was to collect a potent enchanted robe that belonged to the Mage, but was now in the possession of the council. The robe was lost a long time ago to Zagig in a wager, he continued, and the city's Council of Oligarchs had recently recovered it from the ruins of that crazed wizard's abandoned fortress, Castle Greyhawk. It was the queen's duty to collect the robe and return it to the Mage.

Sir Margus did not know much in the way of details about the secretive council, except that they were also sometimes known as the Unnamed Oligarchs and that they went to great lengths to makes sure their business was kept under tight lip. Sir Margus had inquired about the council in the past but had never been able to turn up anything except useless speculation. The noble had no doubt that the captain's loose tongue would likely not go unpunished. This lascivious windbag was a font of information.

In exchange for the recovered robe, the captain explained, the Mirror Queen was bringing a potent artifact to the city: the plans and spells necessary for the construction of an enchanted metal ship. The Oligarchs planned to use this artifact to help control the Lake of Unknown Depths, insuring that their ships went unmolested by pirates.

Sir Margus was listening so intently that he lost the hand of cards he had just dealt. Mentally, he swore at himself for the stupid mistake but smiled outwardly to his opponents as if to congratulate them on finally overcoming Lady Luck.

"You must accept my apologies, my lord," lied the noble as he reluctantly passed the deck of cards to his right—to the elf lord Trential Orrant who had won, "because you seem to have more skill than I gave you credit for."

"So it seems," replied Trential with a great grin.

There were smiles all around the table. Sir Margus's fellow opponents were pleased he was no longer dealing and hoped their luck would change—a most likely outcome, the noble knew, without him in control of the deck.

As the elven lord began to shuffle the cards to his liking, Sir Margus fell back to listening intently to the conversation behind him.

Later that night, his purse now nearly flat, Sir Margus climbed the stairs to his abode, deep in thought. Opening the door, he stood in front of the hall mirror and discarded his cape, his hat, his mustache and glasses. Gord the Rogue looked at his visage in the mirror. Stealing the robe or the ship just might be a way to alleviate the lull and boredom that he had settled into since his return to the city after his adventures with his thieving companions Telene and Sunray. It had been some time since he had pulled off a heist of this nature. He must plan carefully, and quickly, for if there was truth to the captain's story, Gord had little time.

The following morning, a brown-haired, mangy, bearded, limping beggar wandered through the massive crowd gathered near the Highway Gate. He knew that while all these people had come to see the mysterious Mirror Queen, they very likely did not know the true intent of her visit. Gord had been here all morning, attentive to anything that might be instrumental to his success, but as nothing had really happened except a heavy increase in watch patrols, he had become increasingly bored. Aimlessly, he collected purses, weighty pouches, and anything he thought might be of value from unsuspecting members of the crowd. It wasn't that he particularly needed the money, but Gord had always lived by the motto that you could never have enough practice or enough coin.

As he limped through the packed crowd, stopping only for well-planned fits of coughing and retching, he went over what he had learned about the Mirror Queen since last evening. The knowledge had cost him more than a few silver nobles and several late-night meetings in dark hidden places, and what he ended up learning wasn't all that insightful. Queen Gaylathryn, the Mirror Queen, Gord learned, had never been seen in person. Her reclusive nature was said to derive from an almost unnatural fear of death, thus leading her to reveal her visage only in a dweomered mirror, a gift from her consort, the Mage of the Valley. Being the last of her bloodline, she used the mirror as a means of defense; it awarded her protection from the danger of assassins and lords of other kingdoms who might wish to take her crown, as well as the disease and plagues that had swept through the northern lands.

A near-deafening roar swept through the crowd and pulled Gord from his reflections and absent-minded thievery. The massive city gates slowly swung open to herald the arrival of the queen. Gord, along with the rest of the crowd, marveled at the elegance and royal beauty of the noble's procession. Dozens of elite soldiers and guards garbed in brightly colored expensive garments and armor marched slowly through the city's walls, followed by a grand and golden carriage drawn by eight proud and mighty griffons. Upon the carriage, sitting like a crown jewel, was the queen's platinum mirror. An awe-filled silence fell over the crowd at its magnificent splendor. It stood no more than three feet tall and nearly as wide. Encrusted with large jewels of all types, the mirror sparkled like

a sea of rainbow-hued stars upon its rolling stage.

Gord looked in wondrous greed at the great glittering diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires of cornflower blue set in its platinum frame among a collection of pearls, opals, and lesser gemstones of deep violet, golden yellow, and fiery orange.

Pulling his eyes from the precious stones, Gord looked into the mirror itself, to where the queen's silvery image shone in radiant glory as she herself peered out from its magical depths to the city beyond. The rogue couldn't quite place her lineage, but her mysterious features, perhaps elven, were as beautiful as her mirror. All plans Gord had for snatching the Valley Mage's robe and the enchanted ship fled his mind like a mountain troll from flame.

Yes, he had a new plan. He had to do it. He had to have it. He would steal the mirror!

It was not a desire, it was a need. The mirror was too wondrous and valuable a thing to let slip through his fingers. One of the great jewels alone would set him up in the High Quarter for several years of frolicking, drinking, and gambling. Amidst the steps of the marching soldiers dreams of his new future began to enchant the young thief's mind. Gord's first thought was that if he was to have any chance of procuring the mirror he needed to learn where Queen Gaylathryn was staying. Instantly doing away with his beggar act, Gord pushed his way through the crowd, trying to free himself from it so that he could follow the parading caravan through the city to its destination.

With ease, the cat burglar was able to keep the procession in sight through the majority of the city, but his luck ran out as it made its way to the Garden Gate that separated the exclusive High Quarter from the rest of the city. Much to Gord's anger, he in his beggar disguise along with the rest of the crowd were halted by the guards at the gate.

Cursing himself for his choice of disguises, Gord hurriedly stepped into a nearby alley that he knew well. Taking only a quick moment to remove his beggar's attire, Gord speedily found the hidden passage that he and only a few others knew and snuck through the wall into the High Quarter. Running down the alley on the other side, Gord raced back to the main avenue hoping to pick up sight of the queen, but by the time he got there she and her entourage were nowhere to be seen. He had to find out where she was staying! *But how?* He didn't know who the watch captain was, so it was unlikely he could get the information from him.

It wasn't until after a few blocks of aimless wandering through the High Quarter that his next course of action finally struck the thief. While he didn't know who the captain was or how to find him, he did know the name of the tart he was talking to. *Yes,* thought the thief, *perhaps the courtesan Lorinda could help.*

Later that evening, Sir Margus entered the Gold Dragon again. He had seen Lorinda many times when he had frequented this establishment and he hoped tonight would not be any different. To his good fortune, she appeared shortly thereafter. Without delay Sir Margus ordered a drink from the barkeep and made his way over to where Lorinda sat alone.

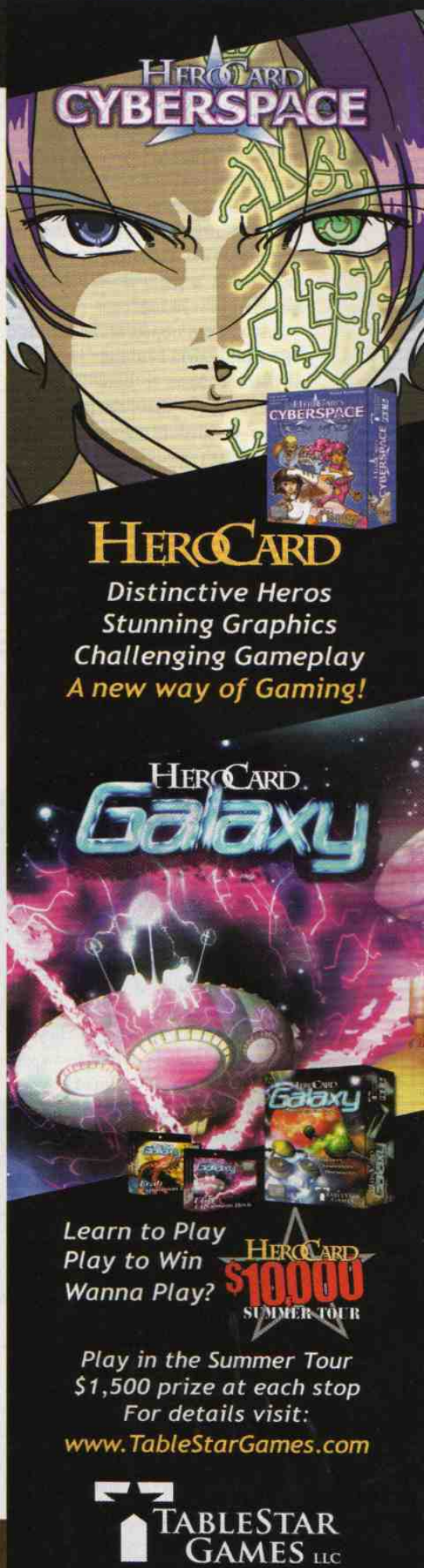
"Some Veluna fire amber, my darling?" asked the noble with a smile.

Lorinda looked up at him, in shock and surprise, and then seeing the noble's good looks quickly smiled back at him. "It would be my pleasure," she replied.

"No, trust me my dear, the pleasure is mine," said Gord, causing the courtesan to blush.

"I have seen you in here before," she said as her suggestive lips took a healthy sip of the amber. "You always seem to do very well at cards."

"It's a gentleman's game and I seem to catch a bit of luck here and there. I



admit I have noticed you as well."

"So why haven't you done this sooner?"

"What? Buy you a drink? Being such a pretty girl I figured that you had more than your share of suitors and that I, a petty noble, probably wasn't to your liking."

Just as Gord hoped, at the mention of "noble" Lorinda almost instinctually sidled closer to him. The rogue could also see that the potent fire amber was already helping his cause. "Well, I am glad you have finally come to talk to me. I have always fancied wanting to get to know you." She laughed as she finished her drink.

Gord wasted no time calling the barkeep to give her a fresh round and as he did so she nestled herself onto his lap.

"Oh thank you, kind sir…?"

"I am Sir Margus of the noble Velunese House of Leewes," offered Gord. "And I can't express to you how much it means to me to make your acquaintance this evening."

"Oh, really?" answered the courtesan in a very pleased fashion. "Aren't you having a drink tonight?"

"No, not tonight. Tonight they are all for you. I must confess, I saw you in here last night with a man."

"You did?" Lorinda paused briefly, as if trying to remember to whom Sir Margus referred. "Oh, him. He is nobody. Nothing compared to you." She cooed lightly in Gord's ear.

"Who was he?" asked Gord, trying to play the slightly jealous suitor who he had no doubt Lorinda was used to.

"You don't have to worry about him at all," she said as if she was talking about a vagrant. "He is just a watch captain from the Market Quarter. I can barely remember his name."

"Please try," encouraged Gord.

"Oh yes, that's it," she said finally. "His name is Farvus Rilleto. But all you have to do is forget about him. Because tonight is not about him, it's about you and me."

Moments later, Sir Margus left a heart-broken Lorinda at the bar and walked down the moonlit street toward the Market Quarter. Once out of the High Quarter, he ducked briefly into the shadows of several tightly packed buildings and pulled out a sack he had lodged behind some broken barrels. One moment, Sir Margus stepped into the shadows and the next out stepped Gord, attired in black leather, his hair wavy black and his white teeth showing through his roguish smile as he fastened his trusted dagger at his hip.

After entering the Market Quarter it took him only a short time to find his way to Farvus Rilleto's house, to which Lorinda had been kind enough to direct him. The captain's residence was a large apartment on the top floor of a three-story building. The thief ducked around to the back. There, shielded by its shadows, Gord's gray eyes were pleased with what they saw. The bricks of the structure were rough and uneven, making for easy foot and handholds. He began to scale the wall rapidly with the agility of a cat, and scarcely a minute later the skilled thief was in the captain's apartment.

From the inner side of his belt Gord withdrew his slender garrote and grabbed it tightly in his hands. He crept through the apartment, making his way into the bedroom where Gord saw the captain, deep in slumber. Closer the thief crept, with feet as silent as the stars and the garrote firmly in his grasp, until he was at the head of the bed.

In a blurring movement Gord struck. The watch captain's neck was held tightly in the rogue's garrote. The captain woke in startling shock and tried to yell out, but Gord pulled the garrote ends tight and the captain was quickly silenced.

"If you want to live, Farvus, you will answer my questions." Gord whispered with a fake accent into the man's ear. "If you do anything more, your life ends right here."

Immediately, the terrified Farvus began to nod his head in assent. At that moment he would have agreed to almost anything. The rogue smiled.

"I am going to ask you four questions. Answer them quickly and I will be gone. I am sure you understand what will happen if I don't like your answers, so answer truthfully and let's just get through this. What is the cargo on the ship, *Dark Moon*, which is coming into port tomorrow?" Gord slightly relaxed his grip on his garrote.

"I'm not the wharf master," the captain coughed out in slight defiance. Gord harshly pulled the strings tight again.

"Watch your tongue before I make you swallow it!" Gord didn't expect the captain to know about the ship and didn't really care if he did; he was just trying to keep his true purpose from being known. "When is Gangle Gern getting paroled?"

"He isn't. Likely they will hang him—"

"Where is the Mirror Queen staying?"

"With a lord."

"Which one?" demanded Gord with a rough shake.

"Lord Fradel!"

Very good, thought Gord, before he asked his final fake inquiry. "What was the Viscount of Verbobonc's purpose in the city last week?"

"To visit the Oligarchs."

> "If you want to live, Farvus, you will answer my questions."

"Don't be a stupid fellow," the young thief growled in his assumed accent. "Why did he visit them?!"

Farvus coughed involuntarily as the garrote was loosened to allow him to respond. "Veluna exchanges intelligence with the Free City, information regarding brigands and corsairs, mostly."

As the captain gasped out his final answer, Gord let go of the garrote, quickly withdrew his dagger, and slammed the hilt of it into the back of the captain's head. "Sleep well, captain," said Gord as he left he apartment to head back to the High Quarter and to the residence of Lord Fradel.

The fact that the Mirror Queen was staying with one of the Lords of Greyhawk excited the thief. The security at such a palace would be much easier to pass than, say, that of the Citadel. Even though it was easier than the Citadel, it was still a great endeavor to get into such a place. The thief knew who Lord Fradel was: A member of Greyhawk's uppermost class. Gord had stolen from him before, but there had been so many heists, he could barely remember what he had taken from the lord. Gord chuckled to himself; he could remember that Lord Fradel's son Arnolf was known to cheat at dice, a fact that Gord himself had witnessed when the young noble had tried to use his tricks unsuccessfully on the thief. Anyway, none of that mattered now. What was of interest was the likelihood that the aristocrat was most probably one of the Oligarchs. Why else would so great a personage as the Mirror Queen be housed in his palace?

Once he was within a few blocks of Lord Fradel's vast residence, Gord ducked down into one of the narrow causeways. On the edge of the dim and foggy street he pulled up on a loose sewer grate, lifting the heavy metal just enough for him to squeeze past. During his many raids about the city he had found the sewer system to be of great use as a means of both access and escape. Down into the sewers the rogue went, hoping to bring himself as close as possible to the palace without being seen.

Gord stole through the putrid tunnels until he found the iron ladder rungs he was looking for. Silently, the thief climbed up to where it met with another sewer grate; he pushed it open and climbed out into a dark narrow street perpendicular to the lord's high palace wall.

"Well, who do we have here?" asked a gruff authoritative voice from behind Gord. Startled, the thief's heart jumped a beat as he continued to quietly place the grate back into place. "Why don't you lie down on your stomach for me," continued the voice. "You would find it in your best interest, unless of course you want this crossbow bolt through the backside of your heart."

Gord had no choice and slowly began to do what the voice had asked.

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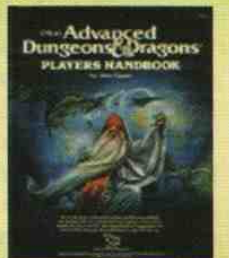

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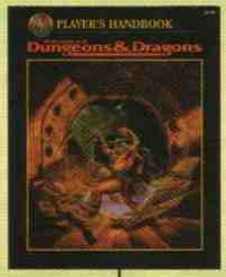

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"It's a good thing Lord Fradel had the forethought to have me guard here, isn't it?" went on the voice as it approached the now prone rogue. "Cause I am guessin' you ain't here to bring me some tea. Well it's all sorted now, isn't it?"

Gord waited until the voice was right over him. With lightning speed he flipped himself over and swung out his legs toward the guard, striking him hard and knocking him over. Instantly, Gord was on top of him, one hand over the man's mouth and the other slamming his head into the cobbles. After one hit against the rocks the guard stopped moving. Gord quickly looked around to make sure he hadn't been heard. Noticing nothing out of the ordinary he stripped the guard of his uniform and put it on.

He had just finished stuffing the unconscious body through the sewer grate when another voice surprised the thief. Several men, also in watch uniforms, appeared at the street's opening, the middle one bearing a lantern. Gord stepped back casually from its illumination, hoping to hide his features.

"Everything okay over here, Jayrn?" asked the lantern wielder.

"All quiet here, sir," replied Gord in his best attempt at Jayrn's voice, thankful that he was relatively the same size as the real sentinel. All he could do was hope the newcomers bought his act. There was a brief pause before the man spoke again.

"Very good, carry on then." The lantern bearer and his companions turned and walked off down the street.

Gord let out a great sigh of relief. Two close calls too soon; he couldn't help but notice an above-average number of guards in the area. *Perhaps,* he thought, *I should turn back.* Luck didn't seem to be on his side tonight and there was no sense getting himself caught or killed. He thought about the mirror again and of the amazing array of gems. It was too grand a prize to pass up, too exciting a challenge. He had to continue.

Watching the guards disappear down the street, Gord made his move for the palace wall. Nimbly, he scaled the smooth stone barrier and dropped down on the other side next to some finely trimmed bushes that had a lovely floral scent. "Night blooming jasmine, perhaps," he thought.

Swiftly, Gord made his way through the garden, leaving several guards unconscious in his wake. He made it to the ivy-covered wall that lead up to a large veranda, where he grabbed a hold of the vines and rapidly made his ascent. Now on the terrace, Gord faced a pair of glass-paned doors that led to the interior of the palace. Soft light spilled out from a night lamp burning inside. Bent in a crouching run, Gord hurried over to the doors, knelt down, and pulled out his set of picks from the inner cuff of his boot. Peering into the room beyond, then at the door closure, it took only a second for his experienced eyes to realize that it was only a simple lock. Selecting the proper pick he immediately went to work. Seconds later, his dexterous fingers worked through the tumblers; he smiled as he heard the familiar satisfying click of the lock releasing itself under his guidance.

At the moment the trap went off Gord realized his mistake. There must have been a magical ward of some sort on the lock as, with a small flash of yellow light, he was blind. Frantically, Gord fumbled for the handle of the door, fear about his predicament beginning to overtake him. He knew he couldn't stand out here—what if somebody else saw the flash of light?

Using his memory of what the room's interior layout looked like, the thief stumbled in, closed the door behind him, and then ducked behind a large couch just as he could hear a guard walking through the well-lit hallway beyond the room he entered. A heavy dread filled the thief; time and his incessant blinking was not diminishing the blindness of the trap. As Gord lay behind the couch he wondered if his gray eyes would ever see again.

Off in the hall he could hear guards talking, something about yellow light in this direction and that perhaps one of the wards had gone off. Gord could hear the guards approaching. Swearing under his breath he rubbed his eyes fiercely to no effect. He heard two sets of boots enter the room and make their way to the door through which he had just entered. Gord knew that as soon as they turned away from the door they would undoubtedly see him and marveled at how they hadn't already.

Having no choice, Gord drew his dagger in one hand and a knife from his boot in the other. Using the guards' voices to determine their location, he got to his feet and crept toward them as silent as the night from which he came. Without hesitation, he lunged forward in an attempt to stab both of them. Gord knew this would normally have been an easy target for him; but being blinded, one of his strikes went wide and his knife-wielding hand flew through a window instead of into the guard's neck. His dagger hit true, sinking into the guard's neck and for a moment the room was filled with the mingled sounds of falling glass and gurgling blood.

Gord heard the surviving guard spin around and leap forward, grappling Gord and tackling him. Both men fell over, toppling first onto the couch and then jarringly onto the floor. Even blinded, Gord showed his grappling prowess and he quickly ended the fight, his dagger entering the guard's throat while his hand clamped over the man's mouth to keep him quiet.

For a second time that evening, Gord began to second-guess his mission. It had not been his intent to murder, he was blinded, and there could be a possible alarm caused by the sound of the broken glass. Maybe, he thought disparagingly, it was time to see the evening as a loss... perhaps of his very eyesight!

As the despairing young thief was about to give up and flee the palace the blindness began to recede.

Encouraged by the hazy sense of vision, the rogue decided he had come too far to turn back now. He waited a few more minutes to determine if anybody would investigate the broken glass. By some miracle nobody did, and, counting his blessings, the thief continued on.

Gord made his way quickly and quietly through the palace toward the tower he had seen from outside the walls. Remote and secure from all other staff and residence, he surmised the tower would provide the best housing for the Mirror Queen. It took him more time than he would have liked to pass through dozens of rooms and locked doors, leaving two more guards unconscious, but finally he approached the middle of the courtyard and the tower. The metal door at its base was new and boasted the most complex lock the rogue had seen in the estate. Its remote location and sturdy construction only added weight to his theory. With his vision still slightly impaired, Gord struggled for several minutes to pick the lock. He thought the task might be beyond his skills, but then, as if by accident, his pick hit something deep in the lock and the bolt slid free. Smiling, Gord put his pick back in his pouch and gently opened the door. He ducked into the tower, closing the door behind him, just as he heard a guard approaching in the distance. *Likely making his rounds,* thought the thief.

Though his vision was hazy, he could see the room he had entered was empty except for a slender staircase that wound upward. Taking two steps at a time, Gord raced up the stairs, using his hand on the wall as a guide when his eyes failed to aide him. Cresting the stairs, he came to yet another door, this one similar in structure and fortification to the one at the tower's base. He was about to reach once more for his lock picks, but upon testing the door he found it unlocked. With a small push it opened.

The high-ceilinged circular chamber into which it opened was bedecked like a study with several desks and a wooden catwalk lacing the upper portion of the vaulted room that was lined by tall rows of bookcases. Gord the Rogue stepped into the room and there in the center sat his prize. He took a small intake of breath, slightly awed by the beauty of the silvery mirror. He hadn't seen it this close before and even with clouded sight Gord could see it was more magnificent than he had imagined.

Moving silently toward the mirror, his fingers itching to hold its encrusted gems, the young thief hesitated. In the silvery mirror was a shadowed and slumbering figure he could only assume was the Mirror Queen. His heart began to race as he approached and was close enough to count the large gems by the dozens. As Gord took a step closer, he saw a flash of movement. The shadowed figure from within had moved! Before Gord could react a crossbow bolt flew out from the surface of the shimmering mirror. He was too surprised and the bolt was moving too fast for him to dodge. It struck painfully into his left arm.

Clamping on his wound with his right hand, Gord felt the effects of what he knew to be a poisoned bolt. The thief retreated from the mirror, pulling the bolt from his arm as the figure within stepped out into the room. Instead of Queen Gaylathryn, as Gord expected, out from the mirror stepped a sneering gray dwarf garbed in the deepest black with a matching long flowing cloak. On his waist dangled a short sword and a vicious-looking serrated dagger. He was already reloading his crossbow.

"Who are you?" asked Gord without hesitation as he continued to back away, clutching his wound. He spoke through clenched teeth as the painful poison made its way through his body.

"I am the one who will be paid handsomely for a particular cat burglar's head," sneered the grim dwarf. "And it looks like my mark will be paid."

"What?" asked Gord, bewildered. The poison made him dizzy and his heart pounded painfully.

"It seems you have offended the wrong person, thief. And now you have walked right into his trap! It has cost Lord Fradel a lot of money and more than a few favors to pull this off, probably more than you ever took from him, but he knew with such bait as this mirror the famous cat burglar would come. And he was right!"

As the assassin finished speaking he smiled and aimed his readied crossbow back at the thief. "You played the fool perfectly. The Mirror Queen was never coming to this city, she is too fearful to even let her mirror travel. But I appreciate you showing up as this looks like it will be one of my easiest jobs ever. And now, you die!"

The dwarf let the bolt fly, but Gord was waiting for it. Just was the assassin pulled the trigger Gord leapt with difficulty to his right, rolling behind a desk and evading the attack. The wayward bolt flew out of the wide window behind him. Weakened by the poisoned quarrel and still partially blind, Gord fumbled frantically to pull a knife from his boot. Gord knew he must not only defeat the assassin to live but also to keep his

> "Having no choice, Gord drew his dagger in one hand and a knife from his boot in the other"

THE HISTORY OF GORD

Gord the Rogue first appeared in DRAGON #100's "At Moonset Black-cat Comes," in which the young thief plays a game of dragonchess with the Catlord. That same year saw publication of *Saga of Old City*, Gary Gygax's first novel and the inaugural volume in the short-lived Greyhawk Adventures line that also saw Gord save the day in *Artifact of Evil*. Gygax published several additional Gord novels through New Infinities Productions Incorporated, including *Sea of Death*, *Night Arrant*, *City of Hawks*, *Come Endless Darkness*, and *Dance of Demons*.

identity a secret—or soon everybody might know who the famous cat burglar was. Disoriented, Gord stood up and hurled the knife at the dwarf, who sidestepped the feeble attack with ease.

Fighting the poison, Gord didn't let up on his assault. Without a wasted action, he leapt over the table and tumbled forward, trying to close the distance on the assassin again.

"It's so kind of Lord Fradel to hire a second-rate assassin," taunted Gord angrily as he moved forward. "That makes my job easier." Seeing Gord's actions, the dwarf dropped his crossbow and quickly pulled a dagger that glistened with green poison from his belt, while his other hand deftly slid into a pouch at his waist. By the time Gord came back to his feet he had his own dagger in one hand and another boot knife in his other.

Even in his dizzy and weary state the speed of Gord's attack astonished the dwarf. It was too fast for the assassin to avoid, and the thrusting thief stabbed the assassin deeply in the pouch, penetrating his searching hand. As Gord pulled back his blade, silvery dust and blood spilled from the tattered leather.

Reflexively, the dwarf pulled his lacerated hand from his pouch with a howl, his fingers covered in blood and glittering with dust. Stepping back from the fuming Gord he hurriedly sprinkled the dust on himself and disappeared from sight!

Gord quickly lunged forward at the spot in which the dwarf was standing, hoping to drive home his blade, but he struck nothing but air. The thief hastily scanned the room, turning around and around in panic, looking for some sign of the invisible dwarf. Seeing nothing he tried to use his keen hearing to gauge the dwarf's location. The only thing Gord could hear was the sound of guards all around the palace being called to arms. His time here was even shorter than he had anticipated.

"Who are you?" Gord queried, hoping to get the dwarf to reveal his location. "Better yet," he murmured under his breath, "where are you?"

Still lacking his full vision and feeling the pain of the poison, Gord understood the imminent peril in which he stood. All he could do now was wonder from what direction the assassin's next attack would come and if he would survive. Then he heard it! A groan of wood from above. Gord looked up to the wooden catwalk that circled the room and ran for its stairs. He was only about halfway up the stairs when the invisible dwarf hurled a vial at him. Gord reacted as quickly as he could. Fortunately for the rogue, the assassin's aim was slightly off and the vial smashed loudly into the railing at Gord's left; he only had to duck a little to avoid the splatter of searing acid that sprayed at him.

To Gord's benefit, just after the dwarf's wasted attack he slowly came back into sight, the magic of the dust broken. He cursed in his racial tongue for missing such a crucial assault and charged toward Gord, who had finally surmounted the steps.

"You want to know who I am? I am Mernegul the Ancient, and I have killed all who have learned my name!" the dwarf shouted as he led with a savage attack from his poisoned dagger.

Gord skillfully parried the assault with his own enchanted dagger, not desiring to feel the sting of the wicked blade the dwarf carried. Then with a low, underhand stab of his knife, Gord cut through his enemy's leather armor, but only nicked the agile dwarf in the leg. As he was struck, Mernegul's face changed from confident to slightly fearful.

Remaining on the offensive, Gord lunged forward, barreling into the smaller opponent and knocking him to the floor. The rogue continued his forward momentum and rolled right over the dwarf, coming up behind him and wielding the dwarf's shortsword, taken from Mernegul's scabbard.

The gray dwarf got to his feet as fast as he could and spun around just as his own shortsword sunk deep into his meaty left shoulder. Once more the dwarf bellowed in pain and the look in his cold blue eyes unmistakably damned the thief to the Abyss. Yanking the blade free from Mernegul's shoulder, Gord only smiled wolfishly. Both of the combatants could hear the guards swarming through the courtyard outside.

"You have no chance to get out alive, thief!" Mernegul cackled as he thrust his dagger forward.

Gord managed to just barely parry the attack again. The poison from the crossbow bolt was starting to overcome him and caused him to stumble in agony, each beat of his heart causing him horrendous torment. He felt his limbs begin to go numb. Seeing the thief hurting, Mernegul took advantage of the opportunity and harshly kicked Gord over and off his feet.

The assassin deftly stepped forward and loomed over Gord, the dagger held over his head ready to end the fight with a violent thrust into the cat burglar's chest. But Gord's reflexes were faster and in a last excruciating effort to save himself, he lashed out with his dagger and sword. Coming in well under the assassin's high guard, Gord's dagger pierced itself to the hilt in Mernegul's abdomen, eliciting a shriek of anguish as the sword penetrated deep into his heart.

Mernegul the Ancient fell dead at Gord's side. For a moment both men lay on the floor, still as death. Gord lay just long enough to gather his remaining strength before he rolled over and searched the dwarf with skilled but frantic hands.

He was certain that such an assassin wouldn't have brought such deadly poison without the antidote in case he accidentally contaminated himself. To Gord's relief, after only a brief search he found the vial he was looking for. Prying free the stopper, he drank down the wondrous blue liquid. Within seconds, the thief felt the antidote working. With a sigh of relief, he noted that his eyesight seemed to have cleared, now nearly back to normal.

Gord could hear the guards arriving outside at the base of the tower. Without a wasted moment he leapt over the railing, landing in a roll that brought him right to the imposter mirror. He could now hear guards coming up the stairs at the bottom of the tower. Quickly, Gord began to pry the gems on the mirror free. While he knew the mirror was a fake, he could only hope that, after all his efforts, there was something here of value. Prying the gems free he could see the diamonds were not diamonds but rather were white sapphires, the emeralds were green garnets, the rubies just spinels, and the other sapphire stones aquamarines, amethysts, and topaz. What he had thought would be worth millions of gold orbs was probably worth only tens of thousands. While not as valuable as the real queen's mirror, the huge faceted gems were still worth far more than he had stolen in many years.

To Gord's good fortune, he realized that the frame was silver, making it all the easier for him to pull loose the great gems that bedecked it. Taking as much as he could, Gord stuffed his prizes into his bag. Knowing that he couldn't use the stairs to escape, Gord stood up, pulled out his silken line with a small grappling hook, and ran to the window. With a mighty heave he was able to secure it to one of the many other palace buildings below his vantage point. Then, using his acrobat training, he slid down along the slender rope just as the guards burst into the study.

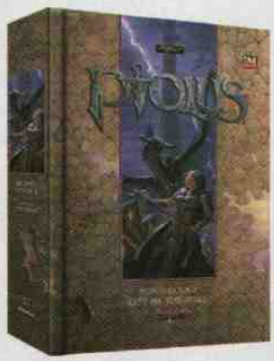
The foggy night helped conceal the thief from sight. As he tumbled onto the nearby roof he offered a small thanks to Beory. With all the guards now at the tower, the cat burglar knew the rest of his escape would go unimpeded.

The following day, Sir Margus of the noble Velunese House of Leewes walked through the streets of the High Quarter in exquisite new clothes made of the finest silks and softest leathers available. Gord had spent the rest of the previous evening fencing all the stones he had taken and had spent a sleepless morning enjoying his spoils. At first, Gord had wondered why the irate lord would use real gems at all, even only semi-precious ones, to catch a thief; but because he had been around enough magic Gord surmised they were necessary to enable the assassin to materialize from the mirror. Whatever the case, the thief was pleased with the results. He had thought it might be in good measure to pay Lord Fradel a personal visit to show him what revenge really meant, but after he took stock of the value of the stones he realized they were sufficient for him to spend at least a month or two living in luxury, as befit a foreign noble of great means.

No, Gord the Rogue was in no hurry for revenge. Perhaps thwarting Lord Fradel again was enough of a payback, but then again cheating his son at dice, or perhaps revealing to all that the lord's whelp was a cheat, might just be the frosting on the cake. Imagine the scandal, Gord thought, if at the same time it was discovered that Lord Fradel was an Oligarch.

Humming a jaunty aire, Gord strolled off to enjoy the day.

A BOOK LIKE NO OTHER...



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AUGUST 2006
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A Dark and Stormy Knight

Another Evening With the Wizards Three

BY ED GREENWOOD ILLUSTRATED BY TOM FOWLER

One last effortful tug brought the huge old green couch into place across the front of the china cabinet, sealing me in for the evening.

Puffing a little, I let go of the rope I'd wrapped around its rear feet. Getting back out again was going to involve my shoulder and some muscles I hadn't used since my high school football days. I hope I hadn't left them in my locker all those years ago, because if I ended up begging Elminster to get me out, it would probably cost me all the ice cream in the house, the barn, and the local supermarket. To say nothing of all the Christmas chocolates.

As usual, I had scarcely settled into my hiding place when the flames in the fireplace emitted a sharp *whoomph*. All the candles I'd lit throughout the room went out and Elminster's familiar voice observed, "Wise enough to stay out of yon suit of armor for good, hmm? Well, lad, there's hope for ye yet."

I heard him sit down and start to hum a snatch of tune I didn't know. By then I'd crawled my way along the rubber mats to where I could just see an inch-wide slice of him. I was in time to watch the Old Mage of Shadowdale lick the finger he'd just dipped into my curry, frown critically, and ask, "What's wrong with the lamb that ye had to do this to it?"

I knew better than to reply. Mordenkainen of Greyhawk liked to arrive just as early as Elminster—probably so there'd still be some wine left—and it would be just my luck to be caught in mid-word when he—

"Ah," another familiar voice said in satisfaction, "same old proper fire, same well-laden board. That's better!"

—arrived.

The flames had risen up out of my hearth in a great reaching wave that had just turned into the approving Lord Mage of Greyhawk.

Smiling, Mordenkainen strode right to his usual chair. "Wind's picking up out there. Right stormy night building."

Elminster's eyebrows rose as he handed the decanter of amaretto across the table. "Where's thy lass?"

"Rautheene? Finding her own way here; trying out a new spell." Mordenkainen looked around the room. "In fact, she should be—"

My long-suffering suit of armor burst apart, pieces clanging around the room, and all that was left of it—two forlorn, disembodied legs—toppled slowly over. The crash as they struck the carpet sounded like two loosely-assembled steam locomotives mating.

And yes, courtesy of Elminster's sense of mischief, I have heard two loosely—

Suddenly the air above the vacated armor's pedestal shimmered. A black-gowned, long-limbed woman suddenly fell out of nothingness onto it, landing in a heap with a startled gasp, hair swirling wildly and hands clutching vainly at empty air.

Then her fingertips encountered something, and she gasped again—in alarm this time—only to find herself blinking at a brimful goblet that was floating serenely in the air in front of her. Elminster smiled fondly at her from beyond it, where he sat at the table with unlit pipe in one hand and a large snowman of white chocolate in the other.

Or rather, the remains of a chocolate snowman who seemed to have been murdered by a monster that took great bites out of him. Archmage-sized bites.

"Oooh," Rautheene almost purred, rising to accept the glass and find her feet in one smooth, graceful movement that made Elminster swallow and Mordenkainen grin appreciatively. "Chocolate."

The Old Mage crooked a finger—and a sphere of white chocolate rose out of a bowl of such spheres on the table (hey, I know archmages) and glided through the air toward her. Rautheene eyed it a little warily.

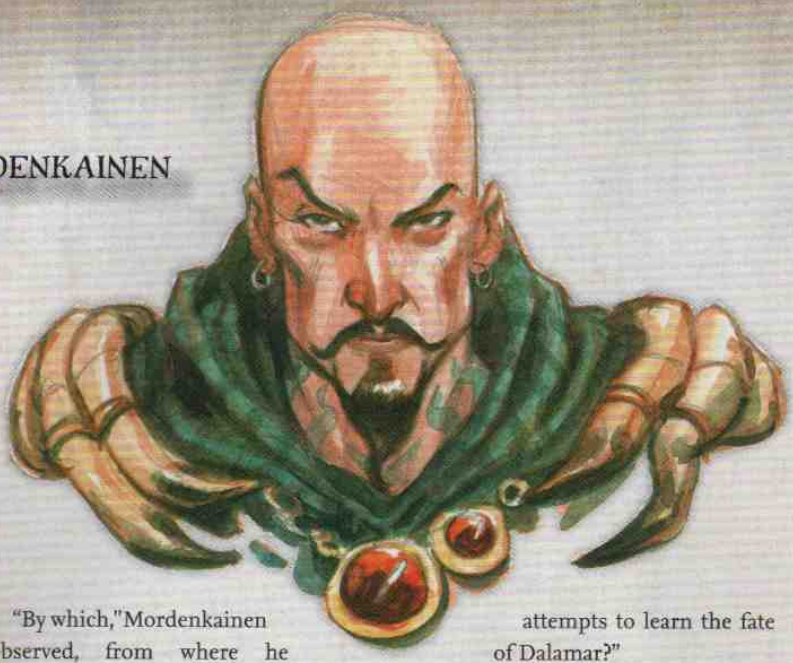
Then she relaxed, catching the incoming confection gently out of the air and thanking him with a smile. Whereupon she winced and glanced quickly back over her shoulder.

"Ah, pray pardon about your armor," she said with real contrition. "I—"

"Never ye mind!" Elminster said airily. "The man who owns it will be honored that a lady mage of thy beauty and grace saw fit to disarrange his armor. Why, I daresay he'll be delighted!"

Rautheene's eyes narrowed. "Oh? Who is this man? I've always wondered who owns this place; is he watching us right now?"

Elminster waved away that sudden, sharp question. "My wards protect all in this room against intrusion and covert oversight."



"By which," Mordenkainen observed, from where he peered into a dish of mushroom caps filled with crab, "my esteemed colleague means to say: 'No.'"

Rautheene's hand raced to her mouth, but failed to entirely stifle her tinkling giggle. My, but the Lord Mage of Greyhawk had an eye for beautiful apprentices. With a kindly but somewhat distracted smile, the lady made a wave of her hand and the suit of armor remade itself. Mostly. I have no doubt had she cared to give more attention she could have remade it in full, but I'll not complain.

"A-hem," Elminster growled warningly in Mordenkainen's direction. "Uncouth tongues should be still when I'm addressing so charming a lady."

"I'd say," Mordenkainen agreed in dry tones, addressing his words to my overhead light as he tilted back his head to slide an oyster down his throat—and follow it with a swig of amaretto.

Elminster winced at the sight of half a decanter of almond liqueur vanishing at one slake, but failed to turn his head away in time to miss seeing Mordenkainen right the decanter, give him what can only be described as a wide, brightly cheesy grin, and crook his little finger in mockery of a cultured matron's teatime manners.

The Old Mage suppressed a shudder, and deliberately turned to face Rautheene. "And how fare your attempts to learn the fate of Dalamar?"

The lady mage made a face as she came to table, saluting him in silent thanks with her glass. "Not well," she sighed. "My magic is not so strong, I fear, as to let me pry overmuch into Krynn without wizardly aid from Krynn itself. And my entreaties in that regard have thus far met with stone-cold failure. I've always known that wizards, taken as an assemblage, have a regrettable tendency to be difficult, but I'd have to call the mages of Krynn I've thus far contacted..."

She waved an exasperated hand as she searched for the right word, and two great archmages sprang to her aid.

"Gasbags?" Mordenkainen suggested.

"Utter twits?" Elminster offered.

Arrogant gluttons, I contributed silently—and froze as Elminster smiled right at the tiny gap I was peering through. Crimminy. I'd better keep my thoughts to myself.

The Old Mage made what was to his two fellow diners a whimsical gesture with his goblet—but was to me an unmistakable salute of approval. Right.

I settled right down on the mat to listen, trying like fury to suspend all judgement and just be a fly on the w—

No no no! Don't give him ideas!

Elminster grinned at me, and reached out deftly to pluck up an entire brick of extra old cheddar from the table where the two mages of Oerth were now shoveling and gobbling food like they'd been starving for months. Jeez, didn't they have food in the Free City of Greyhawk?

Or drink? Mordenkainen finished off his third slender bottle of wine and tossed it casually over his shoulder, knowing El's *unseen servant* would field it in midair and drop it into the recycling bin in the kitchen.

Rautheene's sudden burp was as long and sharp as my table saw slicing plywood. An entire sheet of plywood.

Mortified, she turned a deep, rich crimson—right down her shoulders to her ankles, I noticed, thanks to the rather more daring gown she'd favored this evening—and clapped both hands over her mouth, as if slamming stable doors after—

Well, no, perhaps that wasn't the politest saying to bring to mind just now, particularly as one of her hands had still been holding a deviled egg, and she was now blinking at her two fellow wizards through a mask of frothy golden egg flecked with green (chives) and red (powdered paprika).

The two great archmages who were now hooting and snorting, and slapping the table like country yokels who'd just understood the punchline of a joke uttered several minutes ago.

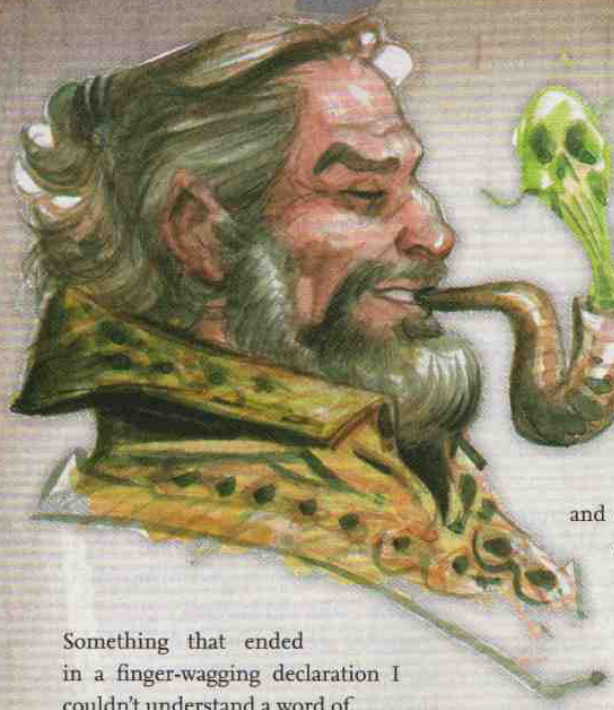
Her eyes flamed—.

Uh oh.

When Elminster saw sparks swirling around her, he mastered his mirth enough to flick his fingers and release some hanging spell or other that made the egg vanish from Rautheene's face in an instant.

Unfortunately, the magic worked a little too well, hauling forth some food already well on its way down to her stomach. Her face changed from fury to nauseated astonishment to shocked realization and then to dark and real rage just about that quickly, as I watched and wondered if I'd still have a house in a few moments.

Snarling, Mordenkainen's apprentice flung up her hands like claws in Elminster's direction, glaring at him as she hissed something swift, slithery, and horrible.



ELMINSTER

Something that ended in a finger-wagging declaration I couldn't understand a word of.

Whereupon—

Nothing happened.

Nothing at all. In a tense silence wherein Rautheene's mouth fell open in astonishment, she sank back down in confusion, darting swift glances all around, and her sudden exclamations made no sound at all.

She heard that—or didn't hear it, of course—and fear flashed up into her face as she clutched at her throat, lips working rapidly. Yet managing to say nothing.

"I believe that's enough, El," Mordenkainen said quietly, then.

The Old Mage nodded, rose, and went around the table to Rautheene. Kneeling, he took her hand as gently as any courtier, put her fingers to his lips, and waved his other hand.

"Boccob strike down this serpent who enspells... me..." The lady mage's fast-spitting words faltered as she heard them ring out clearly, and then faded.

Elminster stared up into her face, looking contrite. "Lass, lass," he murmured, "please believe I meant ye no harm, nor sought to humiliate or chasten. I have a dozen magics at work, to protect this place against any affliction and all of us against each other, and—what befell ye was a result of my own clumsiness and pure mischance. Pray accept my deepest apologies."

Face quivering, Rautheene stared down her arm at him—and then plucked up another deviled egg, in as swift and deft a movement as I've ever seen, and swiped its contents across Elminster's face.

Then she shrieked a little, at what she'd just done, and tried to pull her fingers free. The Old Mage hung on as his spell wiped his face clean, and as she cowered back in her seat, he started to laugh.

In relief Mordenkainen's mirth burst forth, too. The wizard of Oerth let fall hands that I'd just noticed were raised to work some powerful magic or other.

Two roaring-with-mirth archmages were nigh-deafening, but I distinctly heard Rautheene's high, merry tinkling join in, after what seemed like quite a long time.

When at last it all died away and they sat grinning at each other, bright-faced and with chests heaving, Elminster got up off his knees with a grunt and announced, "Well, now! Battle averted, I hope."

"Battle averted," Rautheene agreed, relief clear in her voice and face. She made a face. "That felt awful, feeling the food wrenched back up my..."

"Gullet?" Elminster suggested. "Pray forgive me if there's a more polite and ladylike equivalent."

"Gullet," Rautheene said firmly, flashing him a grin and reaching for more food.

"No throwing food," Mordenkainen said then, very firmly. "If that's not a rule yet—I confess I forget—let's make it one. This is all too good to waste." He waggled his fingers, the doors of my sideboard all obediently flew open. He smiled in satisfaction, crooked one

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finger, and then opened his hand to receive my second decanter of amaretto as it soared over to him.

"Well, now," Elminster told a large bottle of sour cherries in syrup, as he opened it with a sudden wrench of suprisingly-powerful wrists, "that suggests a theme to me: battle spells?"

Mordenkainen crooked an eyebrow. "Against beasts or soldiery, you mean? As opposed to what I might use 'gainst a hostile mage?"

"Beasts or soldiery, precisely," El agreed, through a mouthful of cherries, pushing a large bowl gently in Rautheene's direction. "Ye must try this trifle."

"Trifle?" she asked a little suspiciously. "What's in it?"

"Ah," the Old Mage said darkly, "that would be telling."

Rautheene rolled her eyes. "If all this food wasn't so delightful, I doubt anything would induce me to sit in the same room as you two."

"Why, thank you," the two archmages said in mock-haughty unison—and then looked at each other and started snorting and chuckling and slapping the table again.

Rautheene sighed, looked at the ceiling, and murmured, "Bright blistering basilisks. These 'DVDs' he was blathering about had better be worth all this."

"Aha!" Elminster said, waving a finger at her. "They are—just ye wait!"

I winced, and then sat back with a widening grin of my own, wondering just which movies would the Old Mage choose to show the master and apprentice of Greyhawk?

"And if they're not," Rautheene teased him, scooping sour cream and onion potato chips into her mouth and washing it down with French vanilla-flavored coffee cream (I saw Elminster wince), "just what new and special lure will you promise us for next time?"

"Ah," the Old Mage said slyly, "as to that: what would ye say if I told ye this world has something called a 'chocolate fountain'?"

Mordenkainen's groan of desire was almost as loud as Rautheene's. Almost.

FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

As usual, in the morning, I found (under the large note that read "DON'T YE FORGET THE CHOCOLATE FOUNTAIN, NOW!") neatly written-out game synopses of the trio of battle spells the Three had traded, to whit:

BATTLE TENTACLES

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Area: 20-ft.-radius spread
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell conjures a field of rubbery black tentacles very similar to those created by the well-known *Evard's black tentacles* spell. These waving members seem to spring up from the floor, soil, water, or whatever other surface is underfoot. They bash and slice creatures that enter the tentacle field, assaulting their targets with great strength. The tentacles are studded with irregular short finlike spines, having edges as sharp as many swordblades.

The tentacles make one melee attack every round against every creature within the spell area. Treat the tentacles as a Medium creature with a base attack bonus equal to your caster level and a Strength score of 19. They deal 2d6+4 points of damage with each successful hit. This damage is half bludgeoning and half slashing.

Any creature that enters the area of the spell is immediately attacked by the tentacles and can only move through the area at half normal speed. To you, the tentacles seem insubstantial: you can pass freely through them as if they don't exist, without impairing their attacks or your movement at all.

Material Components: A piece of tentacle from a giant octopus or a giant squid, and a fragment of spine or bone from any aquatic creature.

MAILED MIGHT

Transmutation
Level: Sor/Wiz 8
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Touched armor pieces
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell animates up to two pieces of metal armor into up to two

variant helmed horrors that fight for you (or fetch, carry, open doors, or perform any other simple action you command). These constructs explode into a spray of metal shards when destroyed. See page 175 of *Lost Empires of Faerûn* for helmed horror stats. If you lack that source, you can use shield guardians instead.

The helmed horrors created by this spell silently follow your will. If you don't direct them to do anything, they stand idle. Once given a task, they pursue it until completed, even if you turn your attention to other matters.

Unlike most helmed horrors, the ones you create with this spell have no crossbows and make no missile attacks. If destroyed they explode, with effects equal to a *shard storm* spell (see page 187 of the *Spell Compendium:* 20-ft.-radius burst, 3d6 force damage to all creatures, Reflex half, spell resistance yes, lasts for only 1 round). Note that the damage is force damage. No metal shrapnel survives.

When the spell expires, these constructs abruptly fade away and the pieces of armor that made them fall to the ground.

Focus: Two pieces of nonmagical metal armor previously worn in a battle. The pieces' condition does not matter (they can be damaged), but all of their metal must be present. They need not be from the same suit of armor. The pieces cannot be worn by you or any other creature while the spell is cast.

WYRMCONE

Evocation
Level: Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S, M/DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: 60 ft.
Area: Cone-shaped burst
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Reflex half
Spell Resistance: Yes

Wyrmcone momentarily creates an area of chaotically-whirling, translucent dragonlike claws and fanged jaws that originates at your hand and extends outward in a cone. Its sharp-edged and pointed force deals 2d4 points of damage per caster level (maximum 30d4). This damage is half slashing damage and half energy damage. The type of energy depends on the color of the dragon used as the spell's material component, as shown on the following chart.

Dragon	Energy
Black, copper, green	Acid
Blue, bronze	Electricity
Brass, gold, red	Fire
Silver, white	Cold

Material Component: A very small crystal or glass cone and a tiny fragment or speck of dragon scale, bone, tooth, or talon.

I'm still guessing as to which of the Wizards Three contributed just which spell. I daren't ask Elminster, of course, until I've run out and found that chocolate fountain.

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THE VOYAGE OF THE PRINCESS ARK

PART 36: HOME AND AWAY AGAIN

by Bruce A. Heard • illustrated by Attila Adorjany

This series chronicles the adventure of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D Known World (i.e., MYSTARA) in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the original *Gazetteer* series. The column ran from issue 153 to 188, and this "lost" installment by the series's original author appears here in celebration of DRAGON's 30th anniversary.

From the journals of Prince Haldemar of Haaken, Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire, Captain of the Ever-Victorious Princess Ark, *Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.*

Sulamir 14, AY 2001—Haldemar: Six months already since we returned from our last mission on the Ethereal Plane. The vision I had there about the Glantrian artifact still burrowed through my everyday thoughts like an infectious worm. Helpless was I at the idea it would forever drain magic from our beloved world. Indeed, I warned Her Imperial Majesty Eriadna. And yet, no answer came forth. Worse, I was granted no further audience with Her Majesty, and I dared not approach the Council of Wizards on a matter so grave without her assent. Trouble was afoot at the palace, and yet my assistance lay without a summons.

Weary, I left Talasar in command of the *Princess Ark* and decided to celebrate the Wine Festivals of Alphatia. I found my way to the *Lady Luck*, a familiar haunt of mine in years past. There among the clouds I wished to find temporary solace to my worries and my old friend, Mungo, the *Lady Luck's* proprietor. After many platinum coins foolishly wagered with the help of as many samplings of the best vintages, I staggered to the upper deck of the flying casino for a breath of fresh air. Then, as I gazed at the moon, something very heavy and hard landed on the back of my head.

Sulamir 14, AY 2001—Talasar, from a later account: While on my watch, six imperial skyships approached the *Princess Ark*. The boltmen on watch readied their combat rods, showing confusion and unease from this unexpected visit. Without the customary ahoy, a launch heaved to, carrying a member of the Council of Wizards, palace guards, and a few hooded individuals.

Without proper invitation, they climbed aboard. I confronted them, demanding an explanation for their conduct. The councilman, Lord Niborray, ignored my question and ordered, "First Officer, fetch your commander at once!"

By then, most of the crew was on deck. At Lord Niborray's word, some pulled out their wands. Others hesitated, looking uncomfortable. Lord Niborray added, "Order your crew to stand down. Now. This is imperial business."

I responded: "We take orders from the commander and proprietor of this skyship only. You have no authority here. Come back when he returns."

Xerdon, the chief of the *Princess Ark's* guard, sheathed his sword, ignoring me. Part of the crew followed his example and lowered their weapons. A handful of others, along with Myojo, stood at my side, bearing their weapons defiantly. An uneasy stand-off followed.

To the strange hooded ones, Lord Niborray snapped, "Find him." A hood slid off, revealing the growling, slobbering head of a bloodhound. These lupins looked like the spying-types. They must have found service at the palace since our last visit to their land. One came too close to sniffing at Myojo, and the catman's sword slashed across the bloodhound's snout. A fight broke out between my supporters and Lord Niborray's escort. It soon came to an end when two skyships' worth of marines boarded the *Princess Ark*. We were forced to surrender, and the entire crew was taken to the main prison at Sundsvall, including those with Xerdon.

Sulamir 15, AY 2001—Haldemar: I woke up in Mungo's cabin just after the middle of the night. My head was pounding. Under the candlelight, I saw Mungo sitting next to me.

"I truly apologize for the clubbing," he said with embarrassment. "I had to act quickly. Imperial Guards came looking for you. There was no time to explain, considering your state of mind just then. So I kept you in the... well, in a place the imperial bloodhounds would not find you. Sorry for the smell." Mungo handed me a

cleansing potion and continued. "They're looking for you, old friend. They've arrested your kin and seized your mansion and all of Floating Ar. The Council of Wizards posted a ransom for your head. I just thought to give you a head start. Never liked the Council sniffing around my business. Maybe you'll make some sense of all this. It makes none to me."

I thanked him, and took my leave.

"Wait! Take this, old friend," Mungo added, shoving a stone badge into my hands. "A patron left this behind. I wager it'll come in handy." He winked.

Despite my headache, I managed to cast a few spells and make it back to the *Princess Ark* in no time, unseen. As I suspected, navy sentinels had taken my ship in their custody. There was no sign of my crew.

I was glad to feel a slight tremor under my feet when *Princess Ark's* spirit sensed my presence on her deck. I knew my ship's magical wards well enough to get to the storeroom without being detected. I picked up needful things for the days to come. Surely, this *elixir of aranea ichor* would help me reach my ends. A few wands and rings later, I was off as fast and as quietly as I came. I was going to get my audience, like it or not.

Sulamir 16, AY 2001—Haldemar: Dressed in the manner of a foreigner with a keffieh partially covering my face, I entered the main hallway at the imperial palace. I placed Mungo's stone badge into a recess in the wall. The magical heralds recognized the seal and called out the name of its owner. The voices from the big statues boomed in unison, "His Highness Hal... Haaaah... Ahmed Al-Khileem, Illustrious Ambassador from the Ineffable Emirate of Nithia." Several guests glanced at the statues with surprise, and then shrugged.

I mingled with the crowd of other eminent visitors in the throne room, staying well away from Her Majesty or anyone I knew personally. The statues' voices boomed again, "His Highness, Lord Niborray, Grand Secretary to the Council of Wizards!"

Tromping down the main hallway, Lord Niborray approached the throne, along with an old servant and none other than Xerdon.

"Well, well, Niborray," said the empress coldly. "At last you show up. What news do you bring?"

"Your Imperial Majesty, Lord Haldemar still eludes us. However, his chief of guard, right here at my side, has agreed to help. He knows him well. I think he will be of use."

"Very well, Niborray. Carry on. I have more pressing affairs to attend." She gave Xerdon a sideway look. Standing, she walked past her entourage in a rustle of spidersilk. Everyone bowed very low, as did I to hide my face.

Partially hidden behind a pillar, I watched the councilman speak with Xerdon, who was quietly nodding to him while observing the room. Lord Niborray then

told his servant to fetch them drinks. On a hunch, I followed the old man into a corridor. While no one else was around, I cast a spell of holding on him and quickly dragged his body into an empty room.

"My apology, old man," I said, while knocking him unconscious. I quaffed the aranean ichor and, as I suspected, it went beyond simply altering my appearance—it changed the very fiber of my identity to that of the old man. At first, I struggled to overcome the confusion and remember who I really was. Someone with a weaker mind could very well succumb to this enchantment. I hoped it would last long enough.

After taking his clothes, I transported the servant to a place far away with a flick of my wand. I then returned to his master with drinks. I wanted to learn more about the Council's machinations before contacting Her Majesty. This seemed like a perfect occasion.

By the time I got back, Xerdon had already left. Lord Niborray said, "Forget the drinks, Merod. I have work to do. Let's go."

Sulamir 16, AY 2001—Talasar, from a later account: By nightfall, young Ashari the navigator sneaked to my cell door. She smiled wrily, holding up a bent hairpin. I was free a moment later. A few guards showed up just then, but I convinced them to rest upon the floor, unconscious. To the rest of the crew in other cells, I then made an offer. "Well boys, the choice is yours. You may serve loyally for the purposes of the Council and remain here, or, you may serve loyally your commander to whatever end. Savvy?" A monster's rage bellowed somewhere in a deeper crypt. The crew's support was immediate and unanimous.

We ruffled the feathers of disagreeable guards on the way out. By chance we located the Lord Warden's private skyship moored at the main tower. It was a sleek beauty, small and unarmed, but fast and maneuverable. The weather had been stormy for some time, and it helped us shake off our pursuers. We darted between towers and under bridges. We finally spotted a breach in the imperial skyships' disposition above us and flew up into the clouds. We nearly lost the ship up there, for the lightning was vicious.

Sulamir 16, AY 2001—Haldemar, later the same day: Lord Niborray's flying coach cut effortlessly through the winds. The blue dragon pulling the carriage seemed to relish the raging storm. The posh cabin was far larger inside than the coach's outer dimensions, and surprisingly stable. Lord Niborray kicked off his shoes and groaned, "This project will be the death of me."

"Any luck so far, my lord?" I risked.

"What do you say, old man?" he yawned. "Oh, yes. This devil will get his comeuppance. He's a minor nuisance, though. Indeed, I have a much bigger fish to fry. I'll have that drink now."

"Yes, my lord," I agreed, bowing away. "As you wish."

THE PEOPLE OF THE PRINCESS ARK AND HER STORY

Lord Haldemar of Haaken: An admiral of the Empire of Alphatia and a prince of the House of Haaken, Haldemar also is the owner and captain of the Princes Ark. He is a native of Floating Ar. Many wizards who study magic related to air and flight hail from this archipelago of levitating islands. Although a gambler and an adventurer at heart, he stands as a very skillful wizard, merchant, and diplomat. The Empress of Alphatia, Eriadna the Wise, tasked him with the mission to explore the world of Mystara and negotiate trade agreements with faraway nations. Haldemar is a pure Alphatian, in his forties, with black hair, blue eyes, and fair skin.

Lupins: The crew of the *Princess Ark* had visited two rival nations—Renardy and Bellayne—where they first encountered native Mystaran lupins (dog people) and rakastas (cat people). Both races come in a large variety of breeds with different skills and abilities. The Council of Wizards got wind of Haldemar's report to the empress regarding these creatures' detection abilities. Soon afterward, Alphatian wizards of the Blackheart region kidnapped a number of bloodhound pups at the Council of Wizards' behest. Using their notorious knowledge of monster-breeding, these wizards reproduced the pups in their magical vats, accelerated their aging, and mentally conditioned them to establish a sect of spies at the Council's service.

Myojo: Born of the Katamura Clan, Myojo hails from a world of humanoid cat people, called rakastas, on one of Mystara's moons. He served as his shogun's personal bodyguard. While visiting Myoshima, Haldemar saved Myojo from a dragon. His admiration for the Alphatian captain, a foreigner, made Myojo a pariah among his kind. When a fight broke out between his clan and the crew of the *Princess Ark*, Myojo had no other choice but to join the crew and leave his ancestral world. Myojo now does what he does best: serving as Haldemar's devoted bodyguard. Attractive by rakasta standards, Myojo sports short gray fur. Always alert, his yellow eyes and large pointy ears never miss a detail. Myojo often wears Myoshiman armor and a kabuto war helm decorated in the colors of the House of Haaken (black and crimson, with a gold crescent).

Talasar: An accomplished pirate, his true name is Yodar of the Sea Wolves. His name remains as notorious as the havoc his raiders inflicted upon coastal cities. He was eventually captured, reduced to slavery, and later sold to the Temple of Razud, where he atoned for his nefarious deeds and became a priest. Reborn as Talasar, his seamanship, wisdom, and natural leadership ability led him to find work aboard the *Princess Ark*. Talasar is now Haldemar's right hand man. Talasar is an imposing man in his mid fifties who shaves his head in accordance with the precepts of his temple. His dark complexion contrasts with his slanted green eyes and a thin, long mustache hanging down past his chin, now grown white with age.

Xerdon ["zard'n"]: His duties aboard the *Princess Ark* include commanding the ship's contingent of "boltmen," Alphatian marines trained in the use of magic wands. Xerdon is a professional soldier: cool, logical, and effective. He once was a general but was betrayed by his superiors for executing their orders too well. Following his exile, he found service aboard the *Princess Ark*. Xerdon is an ambitious elf who looks upon his past glory with envy and bitterness. Tall and athletic, he keeps his long silver hair tied behind his neck. His golden suntan attests to all his years in the Imperial Navy, much as his scars from his life.

The carriage stopped soon afterward, on top of Lord Niborray's manor house. He clambered down and, running in the rain, shouted over his shoulder, "Get Ghorogg to its stable."

I gazed at the large dragon. It eyed me maliciously, rumbling, and rearing its head. Glancing at Lord Niborray, I told the foul beast, "Shut up, you. I don't have time to mess with you tonight. I've knocked the block off bigger ones than your kind. You get in there and behave, right now."

Ghorogg did a double-take and groused, surprised at the old man's retort. I jumped several times, trying to grab its harness, and finally kicked the dragon into its stable. There was just enough time to catch up with Lord Niborray. As soon as I entered the manor, the large double doors slammed and locked behind me. I could hear the creaks, rattles, and haunting whines of magical protections resetting. The place was hot with magical wards.

Lord Niborray glanced at his servant and said, "Disturb me not. I have much work to do this night." Without waiting for an answer he went his way and I followed from a distance down two floors until he entered his chambers. I began feeling the tingling of the aranean potion wearing off. Tucked between a massive closet and the twisted wood carving of a misbegotten ancestor, I waited for my transformation to end. When all was quiet, I peeked inside.

There, hunched over a massive tome, Lord Niborray laboriously deciphered a page, scribbling notes on scrolls, totally absorbed with his work.

"Aha," he muttered. "This is how she will do it. I'll have her imperial throne for this!"

The door creaked as I stepped in. Lord Niborray lifted his head and shouted, "You! How in the blazes—"

He scrambled for his wand. My spell went first. The stone floor under his feet turned into mud and he lost his balance. Arms flailing, he fell backward into the mud. I ended the spell, encasing the hapless councilman's lower body and both his hands within the floor.

"You shall pay for this, Admiral," he spat in a furor. "You have no idea what you are getting yourself into. This is far bigger than you."

"Well then," I answered. "I'm damned if I do, and I'm damned if I don't. And I am the kind who'd rather do something. Now, why the arrests?"

EMPRESS ERIADNA

THE PRINCESS ARK

The original vessel was a common three-masted merchantman imbued with the ability to fly. In the course of its captain's adventures, it transformed into a very odd-looking airship. Multi-decked, its masts jut out at an angle from its sides, and the main hull follows a separate mobile section including the steering deck. This deck levitates ahead of the ship and leans in the direction given by the steersman.

The magical alteration bound to the ship is the spirit of a powerful creature named Berylith. As a result, the *Princess Ark* became a sentient creature linked to its captain, as a familiar would be to its wizard master.

The *Champions of Mystara* boxed set compiles the adventures of the *Princess Ark* and details of the ship and its crew from DRAGON's original series.

"I've nothing to say to you," Niborray raged. "Undo your spell at once and begone, lest you worsen your case and that of your crew."

"Pity," I sighed. I grabbed the large tome and left quickly as some of the magical wards began howling and screeching. I ran down the stairs and melted part of the wall to get out of the building. I ended up in a large backyard. The rain had stopped and fog had arisen. Under one of the spheres of light glowing in the garden I chanced a quick look into the mysterious tome. My heart sank at the sight of the first few lines.

"With this enchantment, I, Eriadna the Wise, endeavor to suppress powers of magic of the greatest magnitude, within Our Dominion and all confines of the Empire, thus forbidding the utter destruction that others seek to wreak upon our lands."

I could not believe it. There it was. Proof of the empress' treachery. How could this be? Shocked and angry, I blasted the fence into a heap of twisted metal and stepped into the street. Only then did I notice two figures approaching in the fog.

It was Xerdon with an imperial bloodhound. "Admiral," Xerdon said calmly, "drop the book, please." He was poised for combat, rapier in one hand, wand in the other. "I have you at a disadvantage, Your Highness."

"How did you know I was here?" I inquired.

Xerdon grinned and said, "I did serve with your crew for a long time. I had an idea you'd try something like this. Besides, I saw you at the palace. Nice costume."

"Not bad, chief. But you should trust me more. There is serious trouble in our land, and it is unclear where the truth really lies."

Xerdon turned serious and declared, "My loyalty has been to the empress all along, and my task today is to return to her that which you hold. I have no choice."

"There is always a choice, my friend. Trust yourself." I raised the book and added, "Part of the truth lies in this tome. We must unravel its secret for all our sakes: Her Majesty's, the Council's, and the whole empire's. Is this not what matters most in the end?"

The bloodhound growled menacingly, "Take the book, now!"

I sensed Xerdon's hesitation. Sadness welled in his eyes when he lowered his weapons. At once, pain flashed on his face. He fell to the ground, gasping and writhing in agony. He had been cursed to serve another, no matter what. And he had made his choice.

I cast a spell on him to knock him out. I would tend to his curse at another time. While I did so, the bloodhound imbibed a potion. Suddenly, ripping through its robes, the bloodhound grew into a nine-foot-tall monstrosity, slobbering and gnashing its fangs. The howl of the ogrelike bloodhound echoed in the empty streets. Immediately, wails and barks near and far responded to the call, approaching fast.

The lumbering lupin lunged at me. A pair of leather boots landed squarely upon its snout—it was Myojo, my devout bodygard, swinging from a rope. Above him floated a sleek skyship, and over its railing leaned Talasar with a broad smile. He hailed. "Well my lord, it's not the cavalry, but I trust this ship will do just as well! Grab the rope!"

In a moment, I was hoisted aboard along with the book. Clever Myojo skillfully dodged the oversized lupin and quickly followed, holding Xerdon. He dropped him on the deck with a grunt of obvious disdain.

Sensing what had happened, I said, "He was not at fault. He did his duty. Bear him no grudge."

Talasar nodded, and concluded, "Fine then. Best we leave quickly."

Sulamir 17, AY 2001—Haldemar: The booming voices echoed once again throughout the palace's main hallway, "His Highness Hal... Haaaah... Ahmed Al-Khileem,

ALPHATIA AND THE ARTIFACT

Alphatia is a gigantic but sparsely-populated magiocracy centered on its capital city of Sundsvall. Wizards own and govern the vast majority of the empire's dominions. They are mostly autonomous, which demands much diplomacy on the part of their empress. To make matters worse for any centralized authority, the imperial dynasty and the Council of Wizards share the political power. The constant intrigue and the magnitude of personal magical ability wielded by so many people makes Alphatia a thrilling but dangerous place to live.

Many other nations thrive in the world of MYSTARA. The "Known World" is a small region made up of a mosaic of countries with a specific cultural or racial makeup. In the eyes of Alphatians, the two most important states in the Known World are the Empire of Thyatis and the Principalities of Glantri. The former is a militaristic autocracy with an expansionist agenda. Although less than half Alphatia's size, the over-populated Empire of Thyatis desperately seeks more land to feed its people and its armies. Its warriors also have presented a major challenge to the more loosely organized and self-centered Alphatian aristocracy.

Alphatians view Glantri as an upstart magiocracy and a dangerous rival, although it claims even less land than Thyatis. Glantrians do not favor a unique race like the Alphatians do—as long as wizards remain the supreme authority. Their magical style nowadays is eclectic, but originally they favored fire and energy. Unbeknownst to all but a select few minds in Mystara, an artifact lies beneath Glantri City. It is the result of rivalries between immortals—godlike beings who oversee the fate of Mystara. The artifact's original role was to boost the magical power of Glantrian wizards. Unfortunately, some immortals objected and introduced a tradeoff to the artifact's power. In exchange for the Glantrian power boost, a small part of magical energy is now permanently drained from the entire world. In other words, wizards and magical beings are bound to disappear sooner or later. A dispute yet rages among immortals, during which the artifact might run amok if tampered with. If that happened, it would erase magic on Mystara for some time.

ELIXIR OF ARANEA ICHOR

Haldemar and his crew discovered these spiderlike araneas during one of their adventures. Araneas from the Kingdom of Herath developed a magical ability that allows them to blend in with the non-aranean populations living nearby. They do not simply change shape: Herathians, from their youngest age, adopt a single and specific alternative identity and shape. The change is so profound that they effectively "become someone else" and are barely able to remember their original selves.

The *elixir of aranea ichor* is a medicinal elixir for araneas unable to effect their transformation due to sickness or age. If used by a non-aranea, the elixir functions as *alter self*, with the following exceptions: its imbiber adopts the appearance, size, voice, speech-pattern, mannerisms, personality, and smell of the first creature of his type he sees after drinking the elixir. It does not give the drinker the original subject's memories, knowledge, or skills. The drinker must succeed on a DC 16 Will save to remember his past identity and to overcome any personality issues. If the check fails, the drinker remains totally convinced he is the other person until the elixir wears off. The transformation is temporary for non-araneas, and lasts for 48 hours minus 2 hours per point of Intelligence of the imbiber (minimum 2 hours).

Moderate transmutation; CL 7th; Brew Elixir, *polymorph*; Price 1,400 gp; Weight —.

Illustrious Ambassador from the Ineffable Emirate of Nithia." I made my entrance and the eminent visitors in the throne room quickly stepped out of the way, their gazes switching from Her Majesty to me, and back to her. I was expected.

"Please, Haldemar," she said coldly, "the first time was bad enough!" Palace guards lined up between the empress and me, halberds and rods at the ready.

"Your Imperial Majesty, I have that which you seek. And I will have my audience now."

She gauged my resolve for a moment, then stood up. "Fine," she responded haughtily. "Follow me."

I followed. The palace guards snapped to attention. A sigh of relief and muttering rose from the crowd while a few visitors scurried toward the exit.

Once in her quarters, Her Majesty plopped herself into a large armchair, and without waiting she inquired, "And what exactly do I seek, Haldemar?"

"A very large tome," I answered, "with a word about your plans and the fate of magic in the empire, written of your own hand. Why, Your Majesty?"

"Is that not obvious, Haldemar?" she replied. "You warned me of this Glantrian artifact. It will indeed bring about the empire's destruction. As its leader, it is my duty to protect the Way of the Wizards and their lands. I know the possible paths the future may follow. Therein lies salvation from ultimate doom, and it demands magic itself be voided when the artifact truly comes to life. Its powers are greater than that of mere mortals. Yet I may have a defense against the worst of its effects. It needs only last a day at most. But my work isn't done. The spell requires years of research, and I fear time will run out. This tome is but a beginning."

It all became clear and I could do nothing but agree with her wisdom. And then I asked, "But why the arrests of my kin and my crew?"

She smiled. "Haldemar, have you already forgotten about palace intrigue? You were one of its many casualties. You see, word of your report leaked to the likes of Lord Niborray and a few others at the Council of Wizards. They covet my demise. Alas, my foes succeeded in stealing the repository of my research. With this evidence in their possession, I became powerless to oppose them. They sought to weaken me first by removing you and others close to me. I could not approach you for I and those I trust were being watched. I had to go along with their insidious schemes. It was only a matter of time before my research would be publicly revealed before the Grand Council. Without proof of the Glantrian artifact's existence, it would have been the end of the Imperial Dynasty. Fortunately, you did what I expected. And your chief of the guard, Xerdon, became a fail-safe, especially if the Council's bloodhounds got hold of the tome."

I realized the extent of her revelation and the consequences for my own lands and for Berylith, the spirit imbuing my ship.

"But then," I asked, "am I to become the casualty of your defense strategy? Removing magic of a greater magnitude, even for a moment, implies the lands of Floating Ar crashing to the ground, as well as both my death and that of the spirit to whom my soul is bound."

Sadly, Her Majesty nodded, "Yes, Haldemar. Such is implied. It would be best for you and your ship to stay far away from the center of my spell when I invoke it. Only then will you survive. Your domain can be rebuilt. This much I owe you. And if I fail, I suspect Floating Ar may yet avoid the fate of the lowlands. I bid you now farewell, my old friend. Your kin, your lands, your ship, your crew and their personal effects will be released. The Council can no longer intervene—at least for now. I shall need your assistance to secure important components for my research. Until then, sail forth and linger no more, for the palace is unsafe."

I made arrangements to return the tome safely and, as I was about to take my leave, another thought occurred to me. "Your Majesty, are there any more of my crew under certain curses of which I should know?"

From the icy look in her eyes, I dared not insist.

To be continued, as always...

EBERRON

DREADHOLD

Eberron's Inescapable Island Prison

by Keith Baker and Jason Bulmahn • illustrated by Ramón Pérez • cartography by Rob Lazzeratti

Just north of Cape Far, a barren rock juts out of the Lhazaar Sea. A massive fortress dominates this island, a citadel hidden by a clinging shroud of dark mists and protected by the powers of the strange black stone from which it is hewn. This is the prison of Dreadhold, built to hold criminals too dangerous to be kept within the Five Nations. More than just a prison, Dreadhold is a stronghold of House Kundarak, and many treasures are hidden in its secret vaults.

There are many ways to work Dreadhold into a campaign. A party of adventurers might need to speak to a prisoner held in one of the deepest cells. They might be paid—or blackmailed—to extract an inmate from the jail or a priceless treasure from the vaults of the house. An ancient evil might escape from the prison to threaten the world anew, or perhaps the adventurers find themselves imprisoned. Can they discover a way to escape from this supposedly inescapable fortress?

Background

Two thousand years ago, Karrn the Conqueror founded a prison colony on an island he called Blackrock. He used it as a place of exile but did not build a true prison. The dissidents and criminals stranded on the island lived in a small thorp that has since evolved into the village of Gaolgate. Over the years, a few of the later kings of Karrnath made use of the island, but it was largely ignored. As the Lhazaar Princes spread out across the region, the people of Blackrock were either taken as slaves or became subjects of the princes, and eventually the island fell empty again.

Centuries passed before Blackrock came back into the public eye. King Galifar I was more of a diplomat than his ancestor, Karrn the Conqueror, and even as he fought his war of conquest he realized he would need a place to hold hostages and political prisoners—people too important to kill but too dangerous to be kept close at hand. During his wars in the Ironroot Mountains, Galifar encountered the dwarves of Clan Kundarak and saw their skills with traps and fortifications. Soon after, he recruited a band of Kundarak dwarves to build his prison and assist in securing it. Within a century, Clan Kundarak had become House Kundarak. Backed by the power of the other dragonmarked houses, the Kundarak barons convinced Galifar I's weaker-willed grandson to cede the fortress to the dwarves who built it. The renamed island of Dreadhold became part of the territory of House Kundarak, for as long as they continued to serve the Kingdom of Galifar.

This arrangement continued for almost eight hundred years. With each passing century, the dwarves expanded the prison, adding new levels and new warding spells. Architects added vaults to the fortress and magical workshops where artificers and wizards could work on secretive projects of the house. Today, Dreadhold is an important enclave of House Kundarak, second only to the capital city of Korunda Gate.

In 896 YK, the Kingdom of Galifar collapsed into civil war. It soon became clear there would be no swift end to this conflict. In 900 YK, the Lord Warden of Dreadhold, Zaxon d'Kundarak, contacted the leaders of the land. The rules under which the prison had run were a contract between Galifar and House Kundarak, but Galifar was no more. Dreadhold would continue to serve as a prison, but it would thereafter be an independent operation. Any legitimate authority could send criminals to Dreadhold, provided they paid for the stay.

Today, the present prisoners of Dreadhold include deposed Lhazaar princes, heirs who betrayed the dragonmarked houses, war criminals, and insurgents from across the Five Nations. Some say Zaxon has made mysterious and unknowable arrangements with the High King of Valenar and has had dark dealings with the Inspired lords of Sarlona.

DREADHOLD IN OTHER SETTINGS

The island of Dreadhold is drawn from the EBERRON *Campaign Setting*, although it can easily be incorporated into any other setting—the only thing that needs to be removed are the dragonmarks and EBERRON-specific references. The core idea remains intact: an island prison holding the worst criminals from nations across the world.

The prison itself can be placed on any island, fairly remotely located from the rest of civilization. In the FORGOTTEN REALMS, the island might be placed off the northern reaches of the Sword Coast or one of the northernmost Pirate Isles. In GREYHAWK, you could place the prison in the Grendep Bay or in the southern waters of the Azure Sea.

House Kundarak can be replaced with any powerful clan of wealthy and influential dwarves, while the gnomes of House Sivis might become any cabal of powerful spellcasters with a focus on communication magic. Instead of a connection to Lamannia, the island could possess a natural affinity for the same traits or be the site of powerful magic wards with the same effects, both making it an ideal prison.

THE ISLAND

The island of Dreadhold is an outcropping of rock covered by a thin layer of dirt. Sheer cliffs form an inhospitable coastline, ranging from 40 to 60 feet in height. The black stone is slick and smooth, and scaling it requires a DC 25 Climb check. A Kundarak warship circles the island at night, and two manticores with dwarf riders watch the island from the air. Any ship that weighs anchor off the coast is swiftly spotted unless it employs magical camouflage. Four patrols wander the island at all times. These patrols are fully explored in the section Guards and Wardens.

The Harbor: There is only one safe harbor on the island and there lies the village of Gaolgate. The wall between the harbor and the village is 20 feet tall, 5 feet thick, and is penetrated by a strong wooden gate. The harbor is protected with numerous magical wards (see The Defenses of Dreadhold). Normally, these are left inactive, but a sentry can activate them using an *amulet of the silent word* (see Tools of the Trade).

Gaolgate: Gaolgate is a garrison town. Every building supports the prison in some way, from the massive smithy to the small brewery. A fleet of fishing boats brings in food for the villagers and the prison, as the waters around the island teem with fish. Gaolgate is not designed with the comfort of travelers in mind, but there is one large inn—The Gallows—which caters to the crews of support ships and prison transports. Most of the inhabitants of the island are Kundarak dwarves, but there are a few gnomes from House Sivis who manage the message stations of the island. There are also a handful of others, mostly being former prisoners who chose to remain on the island after serving their sentences.

Residents of Gaolgate: While most of the guards of the prison live in the garrison town of Gaolgate, other island residents spend most of their time in town and are only called to the prison when their skills are needed or when working on a specific project. The inhabitants of Gaolgate have two things in common: Most are highly skilled in a specific trade or craft, assuring everyone has something to contribute to the community, and the vast majority are trained for combat, ready to grab a waraxe and join the fray should the island fall under attack or a prison break occur.

The Trench: A winding, 10-foot-wide and 15-foot-deep trench leads up from the village. Three gate stations stand along the way, each manned by two wand guards and a scout. While there are curves in the path, the final 400 feet of the trench is a straight line to the prison, ending smoothly in a path that winds around to the main gate.

THE FORTRESS

At the end of the long path stands a massive fortress shrouded in shadow. This shadow has the effect of a permanent *Mordenkainen's private sanctum;* people within can see out, but even darkvision

PRISONER BRIAR

CG male half-elf ranger 3/bard 10

Briar the Greensinger spent decades wandering the eastern Eldeen Reaches and Aundair, raising spirits and encouraging the farmers and plainsfolk to rise up against the absentee nobles. His actions set the wheels of secession in motion, ultimately resulting in the great split of 958 YK. Even then, Briar was not satisfied, though, and he continued to roam the borders, darting into Aundair and embarrassing the queen with his words and deeds. The crown devoted considerable resources to capturing the insurgent, and in 968 YK he was brought to justice. The queen knew Briar was a folk hero, and his execution might make him a martyr. Instead, he was sent to Dreadhold, where he sits in a magically silent cell. He has not heard a sound in thirty years. A lesser man might have been driven mad by this experience, but Briar can still hear music in his head, giving him the strength to carry on.

TERMS OF IMPRISONMENT

The dwarves of Dreadhold are not interested in the legal proceedings of the outside world and don't care if a prisoner is innocent or guilty. They only deal with those they recognize as legitimate authorities, generally the appointed officials of a nation. House Kundarak also recognizes the right of dragonmarked houses to determine the fate of their members and for the Keeper of the Flame to condemn a fallen priest—or, for that matter, a demon. As such, it is whispered there are a few fiends bound in Dreadhold's lowest cells.

Initial arrangements are made via *speaking stone*. First, the warden establishes the length of the sentence, level of maintenance, and other details, such as whether the prisoner is allowed to receive visitors or have contact with the outside world. These details determine the price of imprisonment. Typically, the warden expects full payment up front. In a few cases—especially life sentences for extremely long-lived criminals—the prison accepts payment over time. If a client defaults on payment, a short grace period is usually given to make amends, but if the situation isn't resolved swiftly, the prisoner is released. Nations have their own laws, and the Kundarak dwarves aren't concerned with these. They abide by their contracts.

Under normal circumstances, the only person who can secure the release of a prisoner is the one who paid for his incarceration. There is one exception: if two people are within the same chain of command, the higher-ranking member can override the lower. Thus if a Brelish count imprisons a thief, King Boranel can order the thief's release, as the count is his subject. In this case, the house returns one half of the fee paid for the remaining period of the sentence.

On Dreadhold itself, the High Warden holds the full force of law. Prisoners have no rights beyond those negotiated in their contracts. House Kundarak takes pride in the integrity of its guards and outright brutality is rare. The guards have the authority, however, to take whatever actions they deem necessary to maintain order—and a wise prisoner keeps this in mind.

GAOLGATE

Gaolgate (Village): Nonstandard (dragonmarked house); AL LN; 200 gp limit; Assets 5,720,000 gp; Population 800; Isolated (95% dwarf, 2% gnome, 2% human, 1% other).

Authority Figures: **Lord Warden Zaxon d'Kundarak** (LN male dwarf wizard 13); **Warden Oralys d'Kundarak** (LN female dwarf cleric 9/dragonmarked heir 1); **Warden Darunthar d'Kundarak** (LN male dwarf artificer 10).

Gaolgate's assets represent the vast treasures hidden in the vaults of Dreadhold. The people of Dreadhold have access to masterwork and magic gear, but they do not sell these goods. The 200-gp limit reflects what can actually be purchased in the market.

At any given time 180 people are on duty in the prison. Kundarak conducts most of its secret research at Dreadhold, and there may be up to twenty additional artificers, wizards, or magewrights working on secret projects on behalf of the house. The population does not include the prisoners incarcerated in Dreadhold.

cannot penetrate it. This effect also makes it difficult to *scry* into Dreadhold.

Dreadhold has only one gate. A few barred windows and narrow arrow slits break the smooth surface of the upper towers. People who pass through the front gate must walk down a hallway to the inner gate, where three elite and six regular guards keep the area under constant observation. A permanent *antimagic field* covers the central 20 feet of the hallway. This field serves to reveal the presence of invisible intruders or disrupt magical disguises, resulting in immediate action on the part of the guards.

The interior of Dreadhold is as desolate as the island itself. It is built using the smooth dark stone of the cliffs, and the design is grim and functional. The only decorations are the seals of House Kundarak and the Kingdom of Galifar. The upper levels are illuminated by *everbright lanterns*, but there are no lights beneath the surface. The guards rely on darkvision, and the prisoners in the deep cells are left in the darkness.

All of the walls, floors, ceilings, and doors of Dreadhold are strengthened by the effects of the manifest zone (see the Manifest Zone sidebar). In most cases, the doors are simply strong wood, and an *arcane seal* enhances those of any consequence. Truly important doors, such as those in the Deep Ward and those separating the prison wards are instead made of adamantine.

Exterior Stone Walls: 3 ft. thick; Hardness 18; hp 1,080; Climb DC 25; Break DC 55.

Inner Stone Walls and Gate: 1 ft. thick; Hardness 18; hp 360; Climb DC 25; Break DC 40.

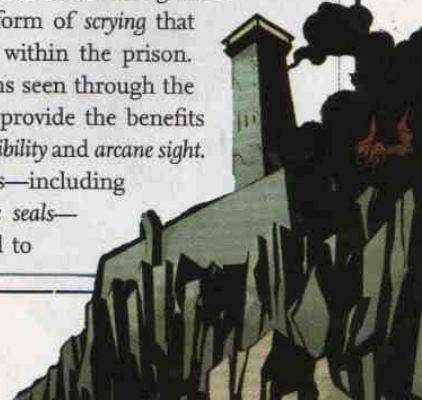
Strong Wood Doors: 2 in. thick; Hardness 15; hp 40; Open Lock DC 40 (if locked); Break DC 38 (due to *arcane seal*).

Adamantine Doors: 2 in. thick; Hardness 20; hp 80; Open Lock DC 40; Break DC 43 (due to *arcane seal*).

OBSERVATION POSTS

There are five observation posts in Dreadhold. These are circular barricades that provide guards with partial cover. The posts possess various magic items allowing those stationed within to keep a watch on their assigned section of the prison. Observation posts also double as guard stations. A group of soldiers remains at each post, where they can be swiftly dispatched to problem areas (see Guards and Wardens for complete details).

Each post contains an *orb of observation*, a minor artifact similar to a *crystal ball* with a few exceptions. Most importantly, the orbs are designed to work within Dreadhold, making them the only form of *scrying* that functions within the prison. The visions seen through the orbs also provide the benefits of *see invisibility* and *arcane sight*. All alarms—including the *arcane seals*—are routed to



MANIFEST ZONE

The island of Dreadhold lies within a manifest zone tied to Lammania, a plane of primal nature and elemental forces. This planar connection extends for 100 feet from the rock of the island and has a number of important effects.

Any liquids, fruits, or vegetables brought onto the island are affected by *purify food and drink*. This effect is continuous—meat does not decay, stored vegetables never rot, and salt water brought in from the sea becomes pure and fresh. This also means that poisoned food and drink are automatically neutralized when they are brought onto the island—although someone who has already been poisoned is not cured by this effect.

In addition, items of wood and stone are strengthened. The hardness of these substances is increased by 10, and the number of hit points per inch are doubled. The break DC of an object made from wood or stone is increased by 5. This effect is more than just physical. Any attempt to directly harm a wood or stone object through use of magic—be it a *fireball* or *stone to mud*—must overcome a spell resistance of 35. Anyone who tries to pass through wood or stone using *teleport, phase door, passwall,* or similar effects must also overcome this resistance. While this helps prevent break-ins or escapes, it also restricts most of the spellcasters of the prison from using teleportation magic themselves. These bonuses only apply to materials while they are on the island. Once removed from the zone, stone and wood items revert to their normal statistics.

the observation posts, and any orb can be used to activate or deactivate the *walls of force* scattered throughout the prison.

The *orbs of observation* have a few limitations. They can only be used by someone who possesses the Mark of Making or the Mark of Warding. In addition, the *scrying* effect has a maximum range of 10 miles.

Communication

There are three *speaking stone* stations on Dreadhold: one in the observation tower, one just inside the front gate of the prison, and one in Gaolgate. Sixteen house Sivis gnomes reside on Dreadhold, charged with operating the *speaking stones* (see page 263 of the *Eberron Campaign Setting*). The leader of this stonespeaker corps is Lady Tyrin Torralyn d'Sivis (N female gnome bard 5/dragonmarked heir 5), a member of the inner circle of her house. In addition to a telepathic bond with warden Zaxon, Tyrin has permanent telepathic bonds with her aide Sarya and with Baron Odian Torralyn d'Sivis, an influential member of the house council in Zilargo. Thanks to her dragonmark she can also use *sending* once per day.

Within the prison, communication is equally important. All of the wardens, captains, lawkeepers, wand guards, and elite guards wear modified *circles of sound* (presented on page 271 the *Eberron Campaign Setting*), allowing them to communicate freely with one another. Unlike normal *circles of sound*, these rings generally require their users to visualize who they wish to speak to instead of sending the message to everyone wearing a ring. Only the wardens and captains are capable of sending messages to all of the rings. These rings also have an enhanced range, allowing them to communicate with any other ring wearer in the prison.

The Wards

Dreadhold is divided into a number of wards for the incarceration of prisoners with differing security levels and social status.

The Red Ward: As the primary prison complex, this is where most prisoners are held. The Red Ward is designed to hold up to three hundred prisoners, and currently averages two hundred. Prisoners are kept two to a cell. They spend most of their time there but are usually brought out in 4-hour shifts for work duty and recreation. Work typically involves small groups, chained together, mining below Dreadhold, from where

Prisoner Deep Fourteen

Human male, details unknown

The prisoner in the Deep Ward, cell fourteen, is a mystery even to his jailers. Only Zaxon d'Kundarak knows the identity of this man, although it is common knowledge that he was shipped to Dreadhold by order of King Kaius III. He arrived at Dreadhold in 995 YK, and was immediately sent to his cell. His head and face are hidden beneath a steel mask sealed with an *arcane lock*. While this leaves his mouth free, some enchantment woven into the metal prevents him from speaking, and the guards have instructions not to allow him near anything that could be used as a writing implement. His movements are sluggish, leading some to believe that he has suffered brain damage, while others say this is another magical effect of the mask. All that is known for certain is that Kaius III wants this man kept alive—but he must not communicate with anyone.

Khyber dragonshards are erratically produced. Depending on their talents, prisoners might perform other forms of menial or even skilled labor. A workshop in the ward allows trusted prisoners to practice their trades. Any large work detail is accompanied by a wand guard, an elite guard, two guards, a scout, and a slaughterstone eviscerator.

The Golden Ward: The Golden Ward is designed for the comfort of its inmates. This is the usual destination for exiled nobles or powerful people imprisoned for political reasons as opposed to criminal actions. It is designed to hold eighty prisoners, and currently holds forty-three. Cells are designed for single occupancy and include well-appointed furnishings, such as a feather beds, finished tables, and comfortable chairs. Trusted prisoners are allowed to spend up to 12 hours per day out of their cells, and can take advantage of a library, luxurious bath house, and other assorted recreational facilities. Security, however, remains tight. Dwarf guards and slaughterstone eviscerators patrol the ward. Disruptions are dealt with swiftly, and troublesome prisoners might lose their privileges or be reassigned to another ward.

The Stone Ward: Some prisoners are too dangerous to allow any sort of freedom—yet for some reason, execution is not an option. These prisoners are kept in the Stone Ward. *Flesh to stone* transforms the malefactor into a statue, after which he is taken to one of the seventeen vaults of the ward.

In addition to criminals, there are a few people who have voluntarily chosen to become inmates of the Stone Ward. Some are afflicted with strange curses that cannot be cured in the present age. Others merely want to outlive certain problems. Most notably, a number of people went into "stone sleep" during the Last War, with orders that they be resuscitated once the conflict came to an end (the warden is still deciding whether or not it has ended or merely taken a pause). While this could be done anywhere, by engaging the services of Kundarak a client knows her body is safe during her "sleep." A petrified character receives all of the benefits the manifest zone provides to stone objects; the effects of the zone do not block *stone to flesh*.

Currently, one hundred and seventy-five prisoners and thirty-two voluntary sleepers reside in the Stone Ward. A single slaughterstone eviscerator patrols the area, along with a minimal force of guards.

The Deep Ward: The most dangerous inmates in Dreadhold are held in the cells that lie beneath the prison. There is only one path to this lower level: a shaft that extends 100 feet into the earth. Its smooth walls are coated with grease, but a levitating metal cage allows travelers to move between the two levels. The controls for the cage reside in the observation post at the top of the shaft, and the magewright on duty does not allow the cage to return to the surface if there are any signs of trouble in the lower staging area.

No light sources exist in the Deep Ward, and inhabitants without darkvision are forced to wander blindly. There are one hundred cells, and prisoners are generally held one to a cell. Over the centuries, a number of the cells have been imbued with magic to counter abilities prisoners might possess. Spellcasters might be bound in heavy hand manacles and placed in silent cells, chambers bathed in magical *silence*. Creatures with dangerous innate magical abilities can be incarcerated in one of the dead cells, which lie within the radius of an *antimagic field*. There are only six dead cells, and currently no artificers or wizards in House Kundarak can reproduce this effect. These special cells are reserved for magical beings that cannot be bound any other way.

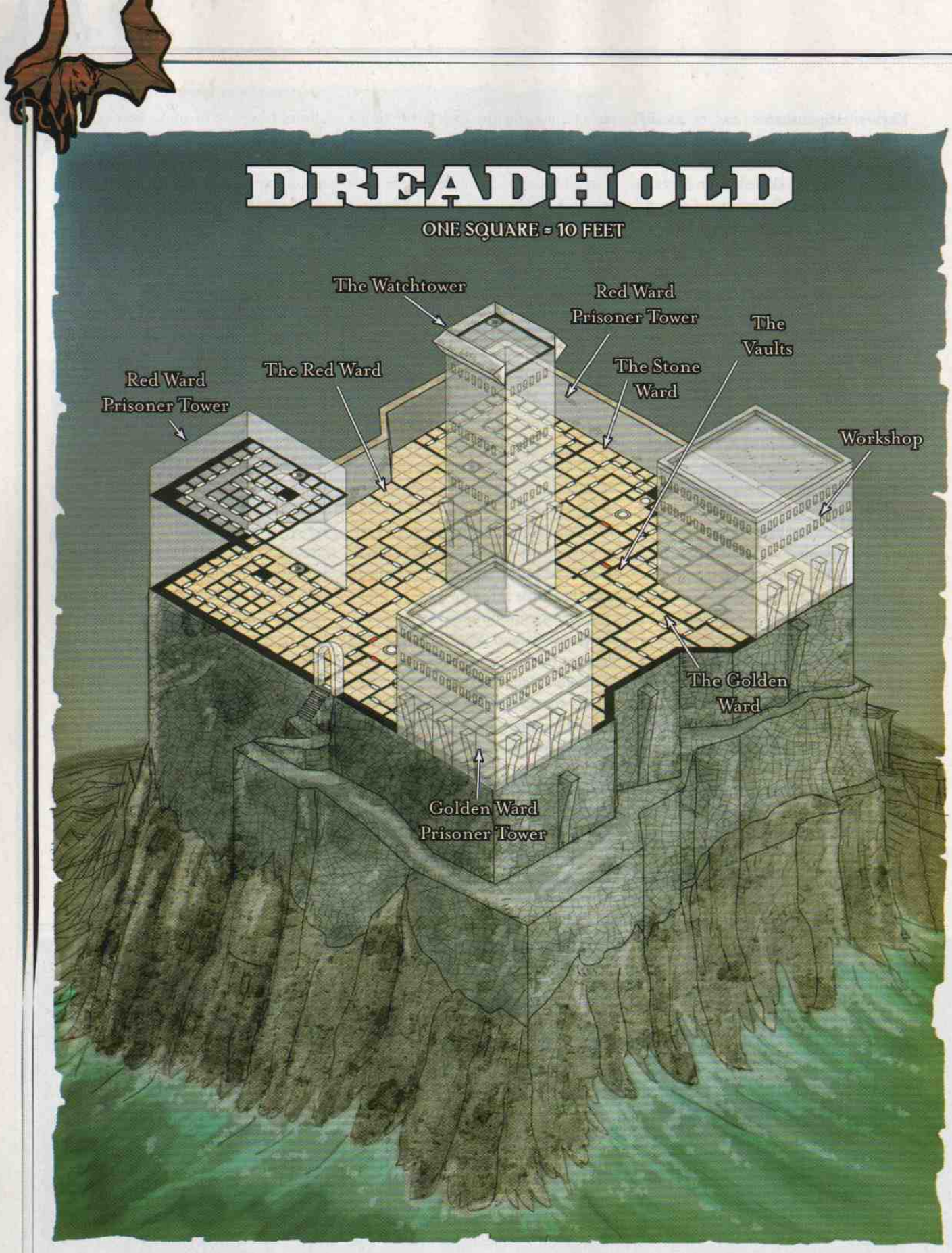
There is no recreation or work for those in the Deep Ward. They remain in their cells for the duration of their sentences. Food and water are passed into the chambers through narrow passages with two locked doors so the prisoner never has direct access to the outside. Even if an inmate does escape

Prisoner Saeria Lantol

NE female elven lich necromancer 12

Saeria is an elven lich from the island of Farlnen. In 545 YK, she became the leader of the Talons of Ice, a cabal of necromancers who served Lady Vol. In the middle of the sixth century, Erandis d'Vol sent the Talons to spread fear and death across the Five Nations. Initial success made her overconfident, and she was defeated by an alliance of the knights of Dol Arrah, warriors of the Silver Flame, and soldiers of Karrnath. While her followers were destroyed, no one knew where to find the lich's phylactery—so killing her would simply allow her to return elsewhere.

Saeria has been chained to the wall of a deep cell for over four hundred years. She does not require food or water, and as a result she has had no contact with living beings since she was imprisoned. A character in need of information about the Order of the Emerald Claw or the Blood of Vol might be led to speak with the known confidant of Erandis d'Vol.


DREADHOLD
ONE SQUARE = 10 FEET
The Watchtower
Red Ward Prisoner Tower
The Vaults
The Red Ward
The Stone Ward
Red Ward Prisoner Tower
Workshop
The Golden Ward
Golden Ward Prisoner Tower

from his cell, a number of physical doors and *walls of force* divide the halls.

Currently, forty living prisoners reside in the Deep Ward. There are also six petrified prisoners—people too dangerous to be trusted to the Stone Ward.

The Vaults: Although not a ward for holding prisoners, the vaults are secured like any other. As a stronghold of House Kundarak, the western side of Dreadhold is devoted to house operations. This includes mystical workshops, luxurious living quarters for visiting nobles, and massive vaults for storing treasures of the house, its clients, and the personal belongings of inmates. These treasure vaults have many of the same protections as the deep cells. In addition to ordinary defenses, the vaults are shielded with *forbiddance* attuned to creatures of lawful neutral alignment. There is no password to bypass this protection, but the house possesses a supply of twenty silver amulets. Anyone wearing one of these amulets can avoid taking damage from the spell, regardless of alignment. These amulets are stored in the protected area and brought out when they are needed.

The ward also contains a nexus with three extradimensional vaults. These can be attuned to the Kundarak vault system (described on page 234 of the *Eberron Campaign Setting*). Many of the supplies of the prison are delivered through these vaults. If the prison comes under attack, the dwarves start passing the most valuable treasures to other Kundarak facilities through these special vaults.

The Watchtower

A single dark tower rises up out of the black mists that shroud the prison. This is the watchtower. It protrudes out of the *Mordenkainen's private sanctum* effect, allowing those stationed within to use *teleportation*, *scrying*, and similar effects, as well as making it the destination of anyone hoping to teleport to the island. The tower contains an observation post with a *speaking stone*. An adjoining portal chamber contains alarms, a permanent *symbol of death*, and a *symbol of stunning*, along with a slaughterstone eviscerator. Those hoping to arrive at the prison via teleporation are expected to *message* ahead of time, to ensure that the symbols are deactivated.

Guards and Wardens

The commander of Dreadhold is Lord Warden Zaxon d'Kundarak (LN male dwarf wizard 13), who has held this post for over a hundred years. Many of his subordinates refer to him as "the Old Rock," saying he is as cold and hard as the people he transforms into statues. While he rarely lets his emotions slip, he is a good judge of character and little escapes his notice. Over the course of his long life he has imbued himself with a number of permanent spells. These include *arcane sight*, *resistance*, *see invisibility*, *tongues*, and a permanent *Rary's telepathic bonds* connecting him with the two wardens, Lady Tyrin, the guard captains, and Baron Morrikan d'Kundarak, the current patriarch of the house.

Zaxon's immediate subordinates are the two wardens, Oralys and Darunthar. Warden Oralys d'Kundarak (LN female dwarf cleric 9/dragonmarked heir 1) served as a lawkeeper for decades before rising to her current post; she is as icy and determined as Zaxon. Warden Darunthar d'Kundarak (LN male dwarf artificer 10) is in charge of maintaining and improving the island's magical security systems. Darunthar is remarkably hyperactive for a dwarf. He remains in constant motion, fidgeting if he has to stay in one place for more than a minute.

All of the guards of Dreadhold are fanatically loyal to the warden and their house. These dwarves have been selected for their skill, courage, and integrity, and are ready to lay down their lives if need be. As exceptional people, all of the guards of Dreadhold use the elite array for ability scores. Because of the resources House Kundarak has placed on the island, guards' equipment can exceed the usual gp limit, although these items are the property of the house. While on duty, guards, elite guards, and guard captains typically carry magical weapons with a base price modifier of +2: *+1 merciful* weapons are most common, but the armories include a few flaming, ghost touch, and bane weapons that can be distributed to deal with problems. Guards with exceptional equipment (well beyond their normal limit) should have a CR modifier or +1 (+2 in extreme circumstances).

Lord Warden Zaxon d' Kundarak

Typical Guard Patrol (EL 13)

These groups can be found wandering the corridors of Dreadhold at all times. A guard patrol always accompanies prisoners when they are being escorted outside their assigned ward. Particularly dangerous inmates might warrant an even larger group. There are a total of ten of these patrols, although generally only seven are active at any one time.

Guard (4): hp 38 each; see page 79.

Elite Guard: hp 55; see page 79.

Wand Guard: hp 28; see page 80.

Slaughterstone Eviscerator: hp 112; *Monster Manual III* page 160.

Observation Posts (EL 16)

Located at five key junctions of the prison (one each at the front gate, the shaft leading to Deep Ward, in the Red Ward, in the Gold ward, and one in the watchtower), these posts are manned by a host of guards and a slaughterstone behemoth. The front gate and Deep

RUMORS OF DREADHOLD

Prisons are rife with rumor and speculation from both the prisoners and their guards. Here are just a few currently making the rounds or scrawled on the walls of some cells.

Ghosts in the Deep: There was a prisoner kept in one of the deep cells for so long that even the guards forgot who he was. Eventually, he took his own life after he himself forgot his name. Now his vengeful spirit wanders the Deep Ward and the only chance to put the ghost to rest is to call out his name.

The Tunnel: One of the cells in Dreadhold contains a tunnel that leads down into Khyber. No one, not even the guards, know which cell it is, but anyone lucky enough to find it could escape easily (if a journey through Khyber could ever be considered easy).

Stone Wizard: One of the statues in the Stone Ward is actually a wizard under the effects of a permanent *statue* spell. Using abilities to change his shape before reverting to a statue, the cunning mage has managed to elude detection for some time now. Rumors say he searches for either his imprisoned brother or seeks revenge against one of the voluntary sleepers who fled here to escape his wrath.

The Prison Master: Nothing at Dreadhold is as it appears. A secretive cabal, lead by a powerful rakshasa, actually controls the prison, and they are looking for a prisoner who has yet to arrive known only as the "dark baron." When he does, all will be released so long as they swear allegiance to the cabal and its new leader.

Ward posts are also manned by a lawkeeper and a spellbinder (see Additional Guards and Staff).

Guard (9): hp 38 each; see page 79.

Elite Guard (3): hp 55 each; see page 79.

Wand Guard (2): hp 28; one of each; see page 80.

Scout: hp 29; with Track; see page 79.

Slaughterstone Behemoth: hp 199; *Monster Manual III* page 159.

Island Patrols (EL 15)

These groups wander the island of Dreadhold itself, looking for intruders and serving as a last line of defense to capture escaped prisoners. They do not follow any set pattern, but the four groups cover the entire island every 3 hours.

Scout (2): hp 29 each; one with Track; see the sidebar.

Wand Guard (2): hp 28; one of each; see page 80.

Slaughterstone Behemoth: hp 199; *Monster Manual III* page 159.

Gaolgate Guards

These troops are stationed in and around Gaolgate. Most take turns patrolling the streets and standing post at key lookout points throughout the town, while the rest are here only in case of emergency.

Guard (20): hp 38 each; see page 79.

Elite Guard (8): hp 55 each; see page 79.

Wand Guard (8): hp 28 each; four of each; see page 80.

Scout (6): hp 29 each; two with Track; see page 80.

Slaughterstone Eviscerator (4): hp 112 each; *Monster Manual III* page 160.

Slaughterstone Behemoth: hp 199; *Monster Manual III* page 159.

Additional Guards and Staff

The following guards, prison officials, craftsmen, and spellcasters can be found anywhere throughout the prison or in the town of Gaolgate. Statistics for these guards can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and *Eberron Campaign Setting.*

Chainmaker (6): LN dwarf artificer 6. These dwarves are charged with maintaining constructs and traps and with developing magic equipment for the prison.

Guard Captain (6): Four of the guard captains are soldiers (LN dwarf fighter 7/dwarven defender 2), while the other two are wizards (LN dwarf evoker 9). At any time, two captains are in the prison fortress and one is watching the harbor wall.

PRISONER MELYSSE MIRON

LE female human cleric 11 (cleric 21 in Flamekeep)

In 497 YK, Melysse Miron challenged the Keeper of the Flame for control of the church of Thrane. Born a peasant, Melysse claimed that she had been visited by Tira Miron, the Voice of the Silver Flame, who revealed that Melysse was her direct descendant and the rightful Keeper. She challenged many of the existing doctrines of the church, claiming it had strayed from its proper path. Initially, divination magic failed to prove or disprove her story, but eventually the truth was revealed: Melysse was the chosen hand of the Shadow in the Flame—the demon lord bound beneath Flamekeep. Melysse and her followers were brought to justice after a brief but bloody conflict, but the Council of Cardinals chose not to kill her, as church diviners believed if she were slain the dark voice would find a new agent. Instead, she was sent to the Stone Ward of Dreadhold, there to remain for eternity.

Melysse has been held in Dreadhold for over five hundred years and has never been revived. She is a skilled orator and experienced cleric on her own, but within the confines of Flamekeep she gains access to the power of her dark lord—making her extremely dangerous. The church, meanwhile, has stricken all mention of Melysse from their records and only the highest-ranking clergy know of her existence.

Lawkeeper (9): LN dwarf cleric 5/dragonmarked heir 1. The majority of the dwarves of House Kundarak are devoted to the Sovereign Aureon. The lawkeepers are his most gifted priests, possessing both the gift of divine magic and the Lesser Dragonmark of Warding. In addition to providing magical healing and support in battle, the lawkeepers use their dragonmarks to create most of the lesser defenses of the prison.

Magewright (90): LN dwarf warrior 2/magewright 2. Some Kundarak magewrights are laborers who incorporate *identify, magecraft, prestidigitation,* or similar spells into their work.

Manticore (6): See *Monster Manual* page 179. A pride of powerful manticores roosts in the watchtower of Dreadhold. House Kundarak has a long relationship with the manticores of the Ironroot Mountains, and these lawful neutral creatures are proud of the role they play in protecting the prison. The manticores perform aerial patrols, often accompanied by a dwarf rider. The Dreadhold manticores are chosen for their strength and intelligence; three of them have 12 HD, two have 15 HD, and the eldest has 18 HD. Their riders are elite guards who trade ranks in Intimidate for ranks in Ride (+5) and have Mounted Combat instead of Cleave.

Spellbinder (9): LN dwarf wizard (enchanter) 5. Spellbinders learn spells to help control prisoners and counter escapes. Common spells include *charm person* (DC 15), *deep slumber* (DC 17), *dispel magic, glitterdust* (DC 15), *hold person* (DC 17), *shockwave* (DC 16), *Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 16), and *web* (DC 15). Spellbinders cannot prepare necromancy or illusion spells.

Guard **CR 4**
Dwarf fighter 4
LN Medium humanoid
Init +3; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19
hp 38 (4 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +0, **Will** +4 (+2 against spells, poison)

Spd 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee +1 *merciful dwarven waraxe* +9 (1d10+4 plus 1d6 nonlethal/x3)
Ranged mwk heavy crossbow +4 (1d10/19–20)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7
Atk Options Power Attack
Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure light wounds*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 8, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 10
SQ dwarf racial traits
Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe), Weapon Specialization (dwarven waraxe)
Skills Intimidate +6, Listen +3, Spot +3
Possessions combat gear plus masterwork full plate, masterwork heavy steel shield, masterwork manacles

Elite Guard **CR 6**
Dwarf fighter 6
LN Medium humanoid
Init +3; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 21
hp 55 (6 HD)
Fort +10, **Ref** +3, **Will** +7 (+2 against spells, poison)

Spd 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee +1 *merciful dwarven waraxe* +11/+6 (1d10+4 plus 1d6 nonlethal/x3)
Ranged mwk heavy crossbow +6 (1d10/19–20)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8
Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack
Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds, potion of haste, potion of resist energy (fire)*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 8, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 10
SQ dwarf racial traits
Feats Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe), Weapon Specialization (dwarven waraxe)
Skills Intimidate +6, Listen +4, Spot +4
Possessions combat gear plus +1 *full plate,* +1 *heavy steel shield, cloak of resistance* +2, masterwork manacles

Prisoner General Kolas Verdgrin

LE male human marshal 7/fighter 3

Brilliant and charismatic, Kolas Verdgrin was one of Breland's finest generals during the Last War. As he served in the war, he became increasingly bloodthirsty and infamous for terror tactics, butchery, and the mistreatment of prisoners. His acts weighed heavily on the heart of King Boranel, who wished to win the war with a clean conscience. In 994 YK, Kolas finally went too far. After he massacred a peaceful monastic community in Cyre, Boranel stripped the general of command. The king could not bear to execute him after so many years of service, but he was also aware of the dangers presented by Kolas's fanatical followers. In the end, he shipped Kolas to Dreadhold and dispersed his soldiers among other units.

Kolas resides in the Golden Ward. Now in his early forties, he is a handsome and well-spoken man. He conceals his ruthless temperament beneath a façade of charm. Kolas still has loyal followers in Breland who believe his ruthless temperament is required to lead Breland to dominance.

WAND GUARD **CR 6**

Dwarf magewright 6
LN Medium humanoid
Init +3; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Orc

AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16
hp 28 (6 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +1, **Will** +6 (+2 against spells, poison)

Spd 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk dwarven waraxe +7 (1d10+2/x3)
Ranged heavy crossbow +2 (1d10/19–20)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5
Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *eternal wand (fireball* or *shockwave*, CL 6th, DC 14)
Magewright Spells Known (CL 6th, 1d20+8 to overcome SR, 40% spell failure while in armor)
2nd (2/day)—*arcane lock*, *make whole*
1st (3/day)—*alarm*, *grease* (DC 14), *mount*
0 (3/day)—*detect magic*, *message*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 8
SQ dwarf racial traits, spell mastery
Feats Improved Initiative, Spell Penetration, Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe)
Skills Concentration +11, Craft (stoneworking) +5, Knowledge (arcane) +12, Listen +4, Spellcraft +12, Spot +4
Possessions combat gear plus breastplate, heavy steel shield

SCOUT **CR 4**

Dwarf scout 4
LN Medium humanoid
Init +8; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +8
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16; Dodge, skirmish (+1 AC), uncanny dodge
hp 29 (4 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2 (+2 against spells, poison)

Spd 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk dwarven waraxe +6 (1d10+2/x3)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +6 (1d8+2/x3)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5
Atk Options skirmish (+1d6)
Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, 4 *sleep arrows*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8
SQ battle fortitude +1, dwarf racial traits, fast movement, trackless step, trapfinding
Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Track (or Mobility)
Skills Climb +8, Hide +9, Listen +8, Move Silently +9, Search +6, Spot +8, Survival +8
Possessions combat gear plus masterwork chain shirt, masterwork buckler

THE DEFENSES OF DREADHOLD

Although Dreadhold's security systems are vast and varied, here is a breakdown of the most common defenses. Anything over CL 13 is a long-term protection created over the course of centuries, possibly with the help of House Cannith. The lesser defenses are the work of lawkeepers and the wardens. A typical lawkeeper can set a *glyph of warding* every day. As a result, the island is filled with hidden glyphs.

In addition to these broad defenses, dangerous prisoners might be bound through magical means. *Blindness* and *bestow curse* might be used to handicap a prisoner considered a threat. A *mark of justice* might be used if the wardens distrust a prisoner but wish to give him the benefit of the doubt.

These are just a few examples of Dreadhold's protections. House Kundarak has had hundreds of years to develop its defenses. Golems, bound efreet,

illusion tricks—a DM should add whatever seems necessary to challenge the party.

Cell Wards

There are generally two levels of wards placed on the doors of cells: those placed on Deep Ward doors and those upon all other cell doors. General cell doors are warded with an *arcane seal* (CL 7th) and a *fire trap* (1d4+7 fire damage; CL 7th; DC 13 Reflex half; Search/Disable Device DC 27). Deep Ward cell doors add *glyphs of warding* (3d8 energy damage; CL 7th; Reflex DC 14 half; Search/Disable Device DC 28) of two energy types and one charged with a *hold person* (7 rounds, Will DC 13 negates). All of these wards can be temporarily disabled with the proper command word.

Hall Wards

The hallways are generally free of wards, with the exception of occasional permanent *alarm* spells (CL 7th) and *glyphs of warding* (*hold person*; CL 7th; Will DC 13 negates; Search/Disable Device DC 28). These protections are moved frequently to prevent prisoners from mapping their locations.

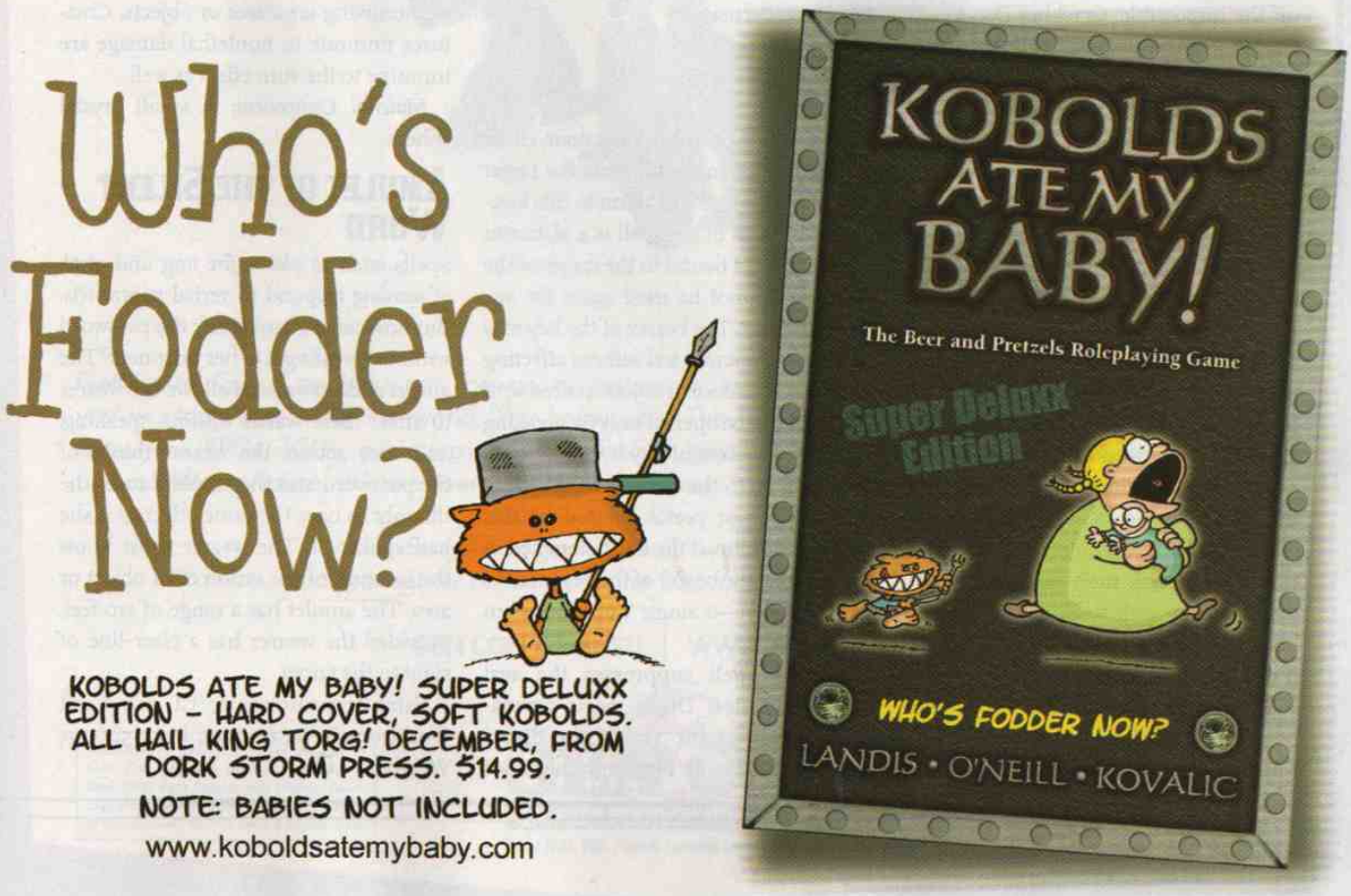
Intersection Wards

Major intersections in the prison, including the areas around the observation posts, are warded with powerful spells and magic traps. These traps generally consist of: permanent *alarm* (CL 7th), two *glyphs of warding* per entry way into the intersection (3d8 energy damage (type varies); CL 7th; Reflex DC 14 half; Search/Disable Device DC 28), *forcecage* (windowless prison; CL 15th; Search/Disable DC 32); and up to three *symbols* (type varies; CL 16th; *death* Fortitude DC 22, *fear* Will DC 20, *persuasion* Will DC 20, *sleep* Will DC 19, *stunning* Will DC 21 negates; Search/Disable DC 33). The *forcecage* effect is triggered through the use of passwords and requires 1d4 hours to recharge once used. The *symbols* are triggered activated through the use of passwords as well.

These wards are also placed in the shaft leading up from the Deep Ward, at the main entrance to the prison, in the shaft of the watchtower, and at the dock wall separating the docks from Gaolgate.

Just Visiting

Visitors are rarely welcome at Dreadhold. To gain access to a prisoner, a visitor must have an influential friend in House Kundarak (or the Favored in House feat) or the support of the government or individual responsible for the prisoner's incarceration. The guards at the front observation post examine all visitors with *arcane sight*, and any weapons or suspicious magic items are confiscated for the duration of the visit. Changelings are required to strip and don bright, distinctive outfits provided by the prison, limiting the effectiveness of their shapeshifting powers. A spellbinder uses *detect thoughts* to study visitors while a stonespeaker questions them about the purpose of their visit and their race (to detect changelings). Visitors are not allowed to enter the prison until the spellbinder is satisfied. If the guards have any concerns, a visitor might be forced to submit to *bestow curse* (–4 penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks) for the duration of the visit. A lawkeeper places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the curse and removes it at the conclusion of the visit.

Visitors are accompanied by a guard detachment at all times, the size of which depends on the reputation of the party and the nature of the prisoner in question. Prisoners in the Gold, Stone, or Red Wards are brought out to the visitor's gallery. Only the Lord Warden can perform *stone to flesh* to release a petrified prisoner, and he might require a day to prepare the spells he needs. A party must have considerable influence to get this request granted. As for prisoners in the Deep Ward, visitors are escorted to the appropriate cell and allowed to talk to the prisoner through his cell door. This is a serious risk, and the guard detail for such a visit might include a lawkeeper, a spellbinder, a slaughterstone eviscerator, one of the guard captains, or even one of the wardens.

Using Dreadhold

With all of the elite guards, formidable magic, and geographic isolation, Dreadhold makes for the perfect "impenetrable" prison. That alone is reason enough for some to want to try to break in or out, the lure of being the one who pulled off the impossible. Cracking Dreadhold should be incredibly difficult for a party acting entirely on its own, but there are a few places they might get help.

House Cannith: The House of Making helped the Kundarak dwarves create many of the more powerful defenses, such as the permanent *symbols* and the *orbs of observation*. Perhaps a wily Cannith artificer wove a few hidden flaws into the system. The party could be approached by House Cannith itself with this information or they might find an old journal in which an artificer describes these weaknesses.

The Gnomes: Both House Sivis and the Trust have agents in influential positions inside Dreadhold. The gnomes would never risk their reputation with direct action against House Kundarak, but they might aid a party of adventurers if it suited their purposes.

The Aurum: Never underestimate the power of gold. The Aurum and House Kundarak are old enemies, and while few Kundarak dwarves would ever ally with the coin lords, there are exceptions to every rule. Anyone in the prison could be an agent of the Aurum, from a lowly laborer to one of the wardens. The party might be hired by the Aurum to perform a task in the prison, or the Shadow Cabinet might use its influence to settle a debt with the adventurers. Either way, an agent on the inside could provide adventurers with passwords, keys, and other critical information.

Tools of the Trade

The Kundarak dwarves have developed a variety of spells, magic items, and other tools to help their cause. Some of the more important ones are provided below. Others can be found in the web enhancement for this article at **paizo.com/dragon**.

Arcane Seal

Abjuration
Level: Magewright 3, sorcerer/wizard 3
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: The door, chest, or portal touched, up to 30 sq. ft./level in size
Duration: Permanent
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell can be cast upon a door, chest, or portal. This magically seals the target and attaches a mystical alarm to this location. The focus of the spell is a platinum key. This key is bound to the target of the spell and cannot be used again for any other purpose. The bearer of the key may freely pass the *arcane seal* without affecting it. Otherwise, a door or object secured with this spell can be opened only by breaking it or with a successful *dispel magic* or *knock* spell. Add 10 to the normal DC to break open a door or portal affected by this spell. In addition, if the door is opened in any manner, the bearer of the key receives a mental alert—a single word, set when the spell is cast.

A *knock* spell suppresses the seal for 10 minutes. *Dispel magic* permanently destroys the seal if the dispel check is successful. However, the act of dispelling the seal triggers the mental alert. A rogue or artificer can sense the presence of an arcane seal by making a successful DC 28 Search check. A rogue or artificer can temporarily disable the alarm using an *arcane key* (see page 169 of *Sharn: City of Towers*).

Focus: A finely crafted platinum key worth 50 gp.

Shockwave

Evocation (Force)
Level: Sorcerer/wizard 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft + 5 ft./2 levels)
Area: 20-ft.-radius burst
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Fortitude partial
Spell Resistance: Yes

Shockwave creates a burst of concussive force that stuns victims without causing any permanent damage. The burst deals 1d4 points of nonlethal damage per caster level (maximum 10d4) to every creature within the area and stuns them for 1 round. A successful Fortitude save reduces the damage by half and negates the stun effect. *Shockwave* has no effect on nonliving creatures or objects. Creatures immune to nonlethal damage are immune to the stun effect as well.

Material Component: A small crystal sphere.

Amulet of the Silent Word

Spells such as *alarm*, *fire trap*, and *glyph of warding* respond to verbal passwords. But how can a guard speak the password without revealing it to her prisoners? The *amulet of the silent word* allows the wearer to affect these wards without speaking. As a free action, the wearer thinks of the password and the amulet causes the thought to have the same effect as if she had spoken it. The wearer must know the location of the ensorcelled object or area. The amulet has a range of 110 feet, provided the wearer has a clear line of sight to the target.

Faint transmutation; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *message*; Price 500 gp, Weight —.

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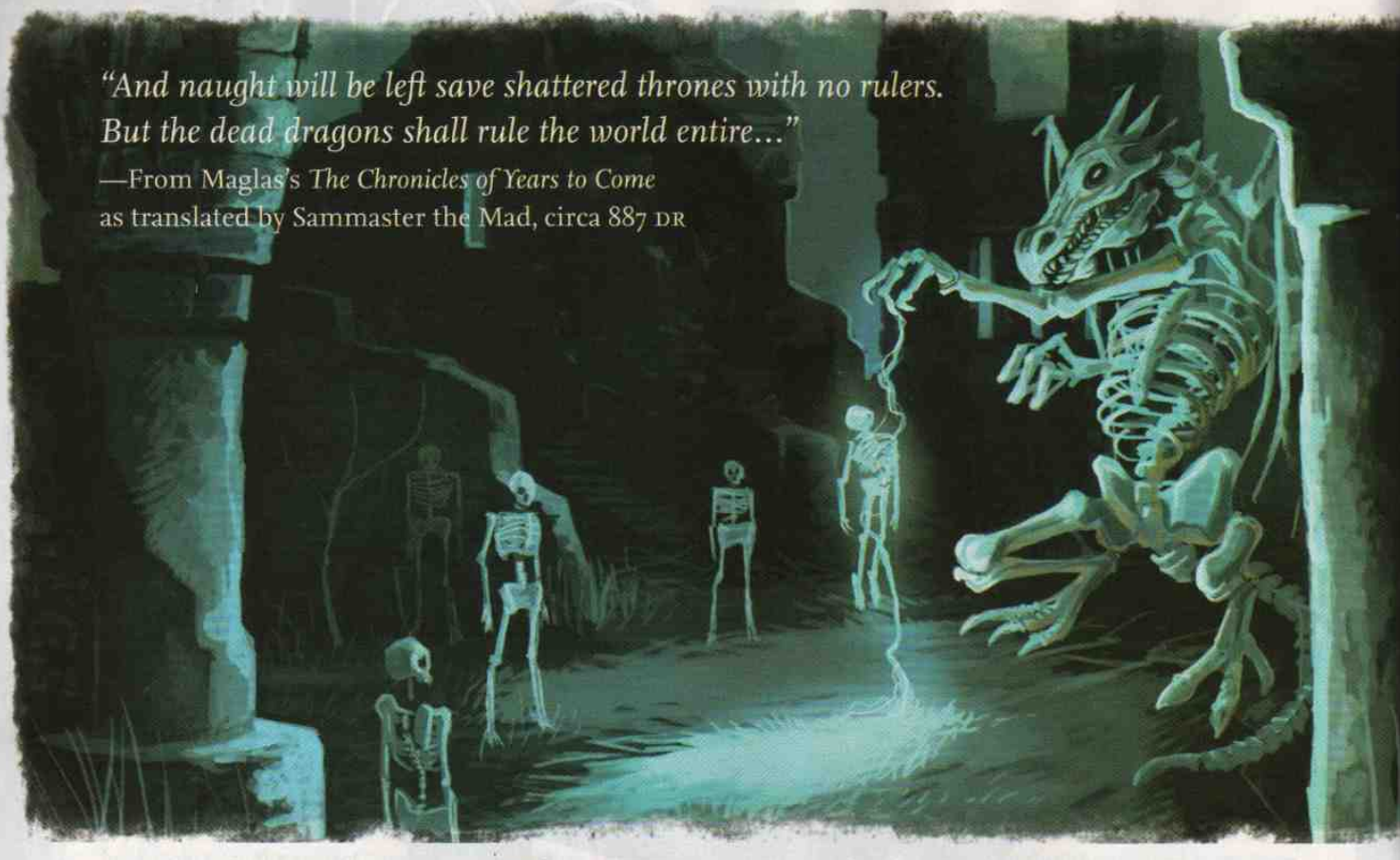

"And naught will be left save shattered thrones with no rulers.
But the dead dragons shall rule the world entire..."
—From Maglas's *The Chronicles of Years to Come*
as translated by Sammaster the Mad, circa 887 DR

The Ecology of the Dracolich

Who does not fear the great unknown that is the night, when spectral winds carry strange sounds from the darkness? That time when dread clutches the stomach and fear tingles along the spine of even the most stout-hearted; where every mundane shadow becomes a sinister, alien visitor. Night terrors have haunted the living since time began, and with good reason, for many imagined fears are all too real. None, though, commands the dark of midnight skies and abyssal caverns with the horror and the authority of the immortal night dragon—the dracolich. The most powerful creatures of nature and magic transformed into ever-living, undead monstrosities, they are threats to all who fall under their sway and few can flee beyond their skeletal claws.

History of the Dracolich

Many sages and magical practitioners—"experts" in the realm of dragons—claim that Falazure the Night Dragon created the first dracoliches. There might be some truth to this, considering that "night dragon" is a commonly accepted term when referring to a dracolich. As wholly unnatural, created beings, however, a common heritage is hard to trace. The origins of dracoliches are as varied as the locales in which they appear, whether they come about through the machinations of madmen and demented cults or by dragons instigating the unnatural process through their own arrogance and naked ambition.

The earliest known dracolich, the infamous Dragotha, was created from the body of one of Tiamat's favored consorts. The god of undeath, Kyuss, granted him unlife in exchange for his eternal servitude. Since then, mortal adepts have developed dim echoes of Kyuss' magics in the form of a powerful ritual accompanied by the consumption of a foul magical concoction—part poison to slay the imbiber and part elixir to bring about the cold existence of undeath—called The Damnable Libation, or more simply, *dracolich brew*.

One other commonality in the origins of dracoliches is their absolute reliance on a magical phylactery in which to store their souls. In this they parallel their humanoid counterpart in undeath, the lich. No one is sure how they came to follow this path and no other form of undead is so reliant upon such a receptacle—except perhaps vampires' connections to their coffins. Perhaps dracoliches rely upon these essential repositories for their nigh invulnerability, although they trade it for extreme vulnerability at the hands of anyone who should locate their soul-storing phylactery. Perhaps this crucial vulnerability holds some symbolic significance, such as being a representation of the Hades Pyxis, the receptacle of Falazure hidden somewhere within the

KNOWLEDGE OF DRACOLICHES

The following table shows the results of a Knowledge (religion) check regarding dracoliches. Those who study the magic of necromancy, dragons, and the most ancient of occult tomes might possess this information. A Knowledge (arcana) check can still reveal information about the type of dragon a dracolich was in life.

Knowledge (religion)

DC	Result
15	A dracolich is a fearsome foe combining all the powerful abilities a dragon enjoyed in life with those granted by an undead existence. As skeletal beings, they are most vulnerable to bludgeoning weapons.
20	Dracoliches are formed when a dragon drinks a foul concoction called *dracolich brew* and then partakes in a vile ritual of reanimation. The complex ritual requires the cooperation of clerics and wizards in addition to the dragon.
25	Like liches, dracoliches hide their life force in phylacteries. Only if the phylactery is found and destroyed can a dracolich be permanently slain.
30	Dracoliches are masters of the dead, possessing paralyzing abilities and mastery over lesser undead creatures. A slain dracolich can possess the body of any draconic corpse within a short distance of its phylactery.
35	When inhabiting a body other than its own, a dracolich spends a few days as a weakened proto-dracolich. If the proto-dracolich can be found during this time it is more easily destroyed and might serve as a clue to the hiding place of its phylactery.

THE FIRST DRACOLICH

While the dracolich as a monster was introduced in 1986 with *Dragon* #110 and Ed Greenwood's article "The Cult of the Dragon," this was not the first appearance of an undead dragon in D&D. Some 7 years earlier, with 1979's *White Plume Mountain*, an arrow pointing off the map of the mountain's environs bore a sketch of a fearsome skeletal dragon and the note, "Beyond to the lair of Dragotha, the undead dragon, where fabulous riches and hideous death await." In June 1988, this note led to William Simpson's article in *Dragon* #134, "Lords & Legends," which presented stats for Dragotha, the one-time consort of Tiamat and a unique undead menace. Dragotha rears his deathless skull again as part of the Age of Worms Adventure Path, coincidentally in *Dungeon* #134, with the adventure "Into the Wormcrawl Fissure."

shadowed plains of the Gray Waste and said to hold the accumulated knowledge of all dead dragons.

PHYSIOLOGY OF THE DRACOLICH

Dracoliches have no metabolism and therefore no need to eat. Old habits die hard, however, and the desire and racial hunger to consume lesser creatures might still exist. Some dracoliches still carry out the function of devouring prey, but the flesh simply falls through their rotting skeletal forms, leaving mountains of mangled corpses. Sometimes, a dracolich eats foes simply out of malice or to feed parasites that cling to its remaining flesh. A dracolich is aware that its maw makes for a fearsome weapon—what better way to make an example out of an enemy than consume him before his friends' eyes? In all other physiological aspects dracoliches follow the same path as liches, having no need to eat nor having any inescapable cravings or dependency on diets. Dracoliches are magically created and, therefore, have no ability to propagate.

PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIETY OF THE DRACOLICH

Consider a creature that lives almost forever agreeing to its own excruciating murder to assure complete immortality. Could it be that all dragons, tortured by the knowledge of their own transience, face this death gladly? Could their near endlessness be a living curse; the very nearness of immortality being a madness that mortal minds cannot conceive? Dare they trust those who promise them immortality in the final moments before their deaths?

Some believe that a dracolich must, by necessity, be insane: a dragon driven by such insatiable need and ego that it cannot perceive its own death and is willing go to any lengths to avoid it—including the tortuous ritual of death followed by an appalling undead rebirth. Others say that lichdom is something most dragons some day strive for, as the thought of their own mortality is unbearable to such narcissistic creatures. Perhaps they are to be pitied—creatures so unable to face rest that they willingly go to any lengths to avoid it, so fuelled by greed and desire that they cannot conceive of such hungers ending. Avoiding death becomes an obsession, a need so great that it causes them to face their own agonizing poisoning to achieve it.

Dracoliches, as creatures of great intelligence, are consumed by needs and quests, driven by the knowledge that one day they will succeed in all their goals and face the ultimate terror of torpidity. They are thus creatures of great distraction, able to juggle a thousand plots at any time, almost needing to do so. They are also, therefore, many things to many people: a tyrant ruling a kingdom, a benefactor to sages engaged in unfathomable studies, a fearsome battle lord conquering vast territories, and a terrible legend. Uniquely driven, dracoliches are terrible creatures indeed, sometimes seemingly mad in their goals and desires—which are almost as endless as their own lives.

When two or more of these ferocious, proud, and terrible creatures meet, such engagements frequently end in one's destruction. A dracolich is a terrifying foe, and other dracoliches rightly avoid their own kind for fear of being matched. As such, they use their ancient cunning to lure others to do their dirty work for them, spreading rumors of boundless treasure along with their opponents' possible weaknesses, all the while doubling and redoubling their already obsessively thorough defenses.

PHYLACTERIES

The one true weakness of a dracolich is its phylactery. As the destruction of this relic spells calamity for its draconic owner, a dracolich obsesses about its phylactery and weaves plots of astonishing complexity around its whereabouts. The destruction of a kingdom or loss of a hoard means nothing to the dracolich compared to the safety of its precious soul.

Dracoliches thus devise an amazing array of lies and ruses, rumors, false leads, and fakes to prevent their true phylacteries from falling into the wrong hands. Alternatively, some dracoliches prefer to keep their phylacteries with them—cunningly hidden beneath the strongest metals, or held within their form—sometimes melded to appear like parts of their own skeletal bodies. Other dracoliches prefer more obvious approaches, like horrendously trapped dungeons guarded by the toughest

monsters. Some prefer the double bluff approach—hiding their phylacteries in places so obvious that no one would think to find them—wreathed beneath protection spells within a cathedral, for example, or perhaps built into the foundations of some huge civic building in the center of a city.

Phylacteries are as unique as the dracolich to which they belong; examples include sheets of paper-thin iron covered in sigils and bizarre illustrations, a length of horn from some impossible creature woven into an incredible knot of rune-inlaid ivory, or a stone puzzle-box with a hundred different possible shapes. Regardless of how a phylactery looks, most possesses the same statistics—a Tiny object with 40 hp, hardness 20, a break DC of 40, and immunity or resistance to a variety of energies, often related to the color the dracolich possessed in life. If the phylactery is destroyed, the dracolich suffers no physical harm but it is unable to create a new phylactery. Thus, if it is slain, its death is permanent. (More on dracolich phylacteries can be found on page 120 of the *Draconomicon.*)

EXAMPLE DRACOLICHES

No two dracoliches are alike, either physically or mentally, and each individual creature makes a special lair with unique followers, and shaped by its motives and desires. In creating lairs for dracoliches, bear in mind that such places are littered with so many potential escape routes that reaching their residents at all could be a task worthy of several adventures. Such lairs are guarded not only by the dracolich but by the surrounding terrain and devout followers both secret and overt.

THE BREATHER OF LOCUSTS

At the heart of the rainforest lies a steep hill strangled by twisting jungle boughs. This hill is alive: a brooding draconic terror that merely appears to be held amid the overgrowth. Yellow bones and decaying green flesh fester in the vines—a rotting olive spider in the heart of its web, a living building of bone, decay, and hate. Vast canvases of skin flap from the frame, like sails on some huge vessel, and ribs like towers rise sharply upward to a gablelike back and a great green head. Two huge blackened sockets stand like caves at the top of this terrible form, and from within them burns a malicious green fire.

The Breather of Locusts is an evolved great wyrm green dracolich (see *Libris Mortis*) capable of vomiting from its rotting stomach huge plagues of bloodfiend locusts (10 swarms at a time). Of almost unfathomable age, it dwells in the legendary Twilight Mires, part of a great rainforest from where it plans, occasionally sending its children—swarms of bloodfiend locusts or hullathoin (both from the *Fiend Folio*)—into the world to do its bidding.

The Twilight Mires are a nightmare land of bottomless, sucking pools, of floating bogs where whole horizons seem to sway like bloated skins, of rivers that twist like mazes through deep canyons, and twisted rainforests filled

DRACOLICHES IN FAERÛN

In Faerûn, the first known dracoliches appeared nearly 500 years ago through the machinations of Sammaster First-Speaker—mad archmage, former Chosen of Mystra, and founder of the Cult of the Dragon. While studying an ancient work of the seer Maglas, Sammaster mistranslated a key passage that led him to believe he alone had uncovered the destiny of Faerûn—to be ruled by undead dragons. As a result of this and the influence of one Algashon Nathaire, Sammaster devised the means to create dracoliches. Virtually every dracolich in Faerûn has some connection to the cult. All known dracoliches were originally "Sacred Ones" created by the cult and either serve a cult cell, lead a cult sect, or have rebelled and now plot their own schemes outside the scope of the cult's activities (often involving the destruction of the cult that created and tried to dominate them).

A recent development in the continual plotting of the Cult of the Dragon involves the Grail of Shargrailar, a cup fashioned from one of the horns of the first dracolich created by Sammaster and the mightiest dracolich to ever walk the face of Faerûn. It is believed that somehow some part of that great night dragon lives on in the cup that bears his name, and the cult seeks to use the jeweled goblet as a phylactery for a new dracolich (preferably Nartheling, the ancient fang dragon that dwells atop Umbergoth in eastern Aglarond). It is believed that such a dracolich will possess the animating spirit of Shargrailar, restoring the most fearsome of all dracoliches to once again terrorize the lands. The leader in this scheme is the necromancer Winn Kardzen of Glarondar (CE male half-elf necromancer 7). Unfortunately, his plans have hit a snag, as the fabled grail has disappeared somewhere in the Yuirwood.

The 1998 release, *Cult of the Dragon*, details more of the cult's history and activities, as well as the ongoing plots of numerous dracoliches currently active across the Realms.

with ancient trees that weep in the dark. In the deepest quicksand abyss of this place the Breather of Locusts hides his phylactery, a sphere of fused animal skulls. Nothing else lives in the forest, its floor of fallen leaves hiding uncountable numbers of bones.

SIN FEASTER

Sin Feaster—the LychSpider, Slayer of Harvests, the Nightmare that Watches and Waits—dwells in an abandoned cathedral on the edges of a cliff overlooking the ruins of a city the dracolich destroyed on a whim. The Feaster, a corrupted wyrm black dragon dracolich (see the *Book of Vile Darkness*), has made an alliance with the followers of Lolth and claims to be a consort of the Spider Queen herself. Its ruinous cathedral is choked with vast webs, with the dracolich lairing in the spire itself, hundreds of feet up, where it watches and broods over its phylactery, an iron sphere that sits at the top of the spire. Driders and spiders live in vast numbers in the dreadful city of webs, making it a nightmare of arachnid horrors. The spiders have spread their influence over the rocky hills and deep valleys, giving the region its name: the Ill-Woven Vales.

AURGLOROASA

Within the lost dwarven city of Thunderhome—a realm she personally destroyed—the shadow dragon dracolich Aurgloroasa scrys all those she calls foes. Vain and powerful, Aurgloroasa is an obsessive schemer and calculating adversary—traits exemplified by her fixation with collecting every scale she has ever lost and fusing each brittle obsidian shard back onto her undead form, partially disguising her undead nature. Through her subtle manipulations from deep within the mountain, Aurgloroasa controls a vast network of worshipful agents, dictating events through them and from the shadows that cloak her every movement. The poisoned whispers she hisses from the darkness and her mastery of shadows have led her to be known as the Sibilant Shade.

AURGLOROASA **CR 23**

Female ancient shadow dragon dracolich
CE Huge undead
Draconomicon 146 and 191
Init +2; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +31, Spot +29
Aura frightful presence (300 ft., Will DC 35)
Language Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarf, Elven, Gnome, Goblin, Infernal, Terran, Undercommon

AC 52, touch 8, flat-footed 52
hp 387 (31 HD); **DR** 15/magic and 5/bludgeoning
Immune cold, electricity, energy drain, paralysis, polymorph, sleep; undead traits
SR 33
Fort +22,

Ref +19, **Will** +26

Spd 80 ft. (6 squares), 150 ft. fly (poor)

Melee bite +40 (2d8+10 plus 1d6 cold plus paralysis) and
2 claws +37 (2d6+5 plus 1d6 cold plus paralysis) and
2 wings +37 (1d8+5 plus 1d6 cold plus paralysis) and
tail slap +37 (2d8+12 plus 1d6 cold plus paralysis)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +31; **Grp** +49

Special Actions breath weapon (50-foot cone, 6 negative levels, DC 37), paralyzing gaze

Spells Known (CL 13th, +29 ranged touch)
6th (5/day)—*create undead, disintegrate* (DC 26)
5th (8/day)—*magic jar* (DC 27), *mind fog, persistent image* (DC 25)
4th (8/day)—*bestow curse* (DC 26), *crushing despair* (DC 24), *summon monster IV, unholy blight* (DC 24)
3rd (16/day)—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, fireball* (DC 23), *ray of exhaustion* (DC 25)
2nd (8/day)—*alter self, blindness/deafness* (DC 24), *darkness, desecrate, web* (DC 22)
1st (9/day)—*chill touch* (DC 23), *magic missile, obscuring mist, ray of enfeeblement* (DC 23), *shield*
0 (6/day)—*arcane mark, dancing lights, daze* (DC 20), *detect magic, ghost sound, mage hand, message, prestidigitation, read magic*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th)
3/day—*mirror image, nondetection*
2/day—*dimension door*
1/day—*shadow walk*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th)
1/3 days—*control undead*

Abilities Str 31, Dex 10, Con —, Int 28, Wis 28, Cha 31

SQ invulnerability, shadow blend

Feats Blind-Fight, Flyby Attack, Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Hover, Improve Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack, Quicken Spell, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (necromancy), Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Appraise +24, Bluff +44, Concentration +25, Diplomacy +35, Gather Information +40, Hide +30, Intimidate +44, Knowledge (arcana) +39, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +34, Knowledge (history) +34, Knowledge (local) +24, Knowledge (nature) +24, Knowledge (religion) +43, Knowledge (the planes) +43, Listen +31, Move Silently +35, Sense Motive +39, Spellcraft +43, Spot +29

Possessions *bracers of armor +8, crystal ball with true seeing, darkskull, gem of seeing, ring of wizardy III, wand of gentle repose* (44 charges)

Breath Weapon (Su) Aurgloroasa's breath weapon is a 50-foot cone of billowing smoky shadows. Those affected by this breath attack gain 6 negative levels. Those who make a successful DC 37 Reflex save gain only 3 negative levels. Removing a negative level requires a DC 37 Fortitude save 24 hours later (see the rules for energy drain on page 308 of the *Monster Manual*).

Paralyzing Gaze (Su) Aurgloroasa's gaze can paralyze victims within 40 feet who fail a DC 35 Fortitude save. If the saving throw is successful, the victim is forever immune to her gaze. If it fails, the victim is paralyzed for 2d6 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Paralyzing Touch (Su) Any creature struck by one of Aurgloroasa's physical attacks must make a DC 35 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 2d6 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Invulnerability If Aurgloroasa is slain, her spirit immediately returns to her phylactery, a single unremarkable onyx gem she hides in plain sight upon a towering obsidian pillar within her lair. If no dragon-type corpse lies within 90 feet for her spirit to posess, the dracolich is trapped within her phylactery until such a time—if ever—that a corpse becomes available. If her phylactery is destroyed while it contains the dracolich's spirit and a suitable corpse is not within range, Aurgloroasa is permanently slain. Likewise, she is unable to possess the corpses of other dragons if her phylactery is destroyed.

Shadow Blend (Su) In any condition of illumination other than full daylight, Aurgloroasa can disappear into the shadows, giving her total concealment. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability. A *daylight* spell, however, does.

DRACOLICHES IN EBERRON

Who knows what intrigues work within the mysterious land of Argonnessen? Some historians claim to have found evidence implying that some dragons allied themselves with the forces of Khyber during the Age of Demons, the cost of their allegiance being a dark gift of immortality—the secrets of creating dracoliches. Some wonder if the draconic stewards of this knowledge still secretly create undead dragons for their own unfathomable purposes. Perhaps they seek to retain the wisdom of their elders like the elves of Aerenal, or possibly an army of undead dragons now bides its immortal time deep within the draconic continent.

As an aside, the Keeper, one of the Dark Six, also takes the form of a skeletal dragon, and makes his lair in the Demon Wastes.

BECOMING A DRACOLICH

Although the *dracolich brew* and accompanying ritual is by far the most common method of becoming a dracolich (if such a thing can be considered common), there are other, even less-known, paths to this form of immortality.

The Well of Dragons: Hidden in an ancient caldera deep within a range of violently active volcanic spires, the Well of Dragons is difficult to reach even by draconic standards. This stagnant lake has been a dragon graveyard for untold centuries, its murky black waters riddled with ash and islands of dragon bones. Unlike other dragon graveyards, though, this place has been forsaken by all goodly dragons, and thus only chromatic dragons come here to die.

A cursed place said to have once been a brooding pit of the great dragon Tiamat, the dragon mother beckons her most powerful children back to the Well of Dragons as they near the times

of their deaths. The Chromatic Dragon is not a nurturing mother, though, and seeks the service of her spawn even in death. Most dragons who drink directly from the Well of Dragons are stricken down and die immediately, animating as mindless zombie dragons (see the *Draconomicon*, page 198) in 1d4 days. Those with exceptionally powerful personalities (Charisma of 25 or greater) sometimes manage to retain their minds, awaking in 1d4 days as dracoliches, the skulls of nearby lesser dragons spontaneously becoming their phylacteries. The waters of the Well of Dragons have no effect if removed from their tainted caldera.

Through the centuries the Well of Dragons has become a legend among dragonkind, leading countless wyrms on fruitless and often fatal searches for its location. Those who find the caldera must still contend with the dead wyrms that have come before them, now total slaves to Tiamat's will and protectors of the foul well.

Spiritgorgers: After uncounted eons of undeath some liches'—and even some dracoliches'—physical forms decay to dust, leaving only their phylacteries behind. In most cases such undead reform in some hateful new body, refreshed and more powerful than ever—but occasionally they return to their phylacteries as trapped souls. Such phylacteries, known as spiritgorgers, are dangerous to deal with. The hateful unlife within the phylacteries whisper and make promises to anyone who has the misfortune to find them. If the owner makes a willing pact with the phylactery he curses himself with lichdom—his physical form is instantly destroyed and he rises as a lich with two minds in one corrupt body. Such schizophrenic abhorrences are usually driven mad by their impossible double mind or are wholly overwhelmed by the lich's ancient sentience.

Rare cases exist of demented dracoliches being created in such a way. The mad dracolich of the Corusk Mountains calling himself the Infernal Skald is one such example of this sort, combining the essence of the ancient dragon Prystisthese the White with the frost giant sorcerer/bard Beostagg. Able to assume either form, the Skald alternates between visiting the giantholds of the mountains as a lorekeeper and entertainer or razing them as a draconic attacker—often both on the same lodge within a week.

Soul Substitution: On very rare occasions, when the circumstances are just right, a dragon skeleton that has been necromantically charged and kept in long proximity with a receptacle holding the essence of some powerful evil being—such as an entrapped fiend or bound soul—can spontaneously arise as a dracolich. One occurrence of this phenomenon bides its time at the Silphar Royal Museum in the Kingdom of Raoke. For long years this museum has displayed the treasures of the ancient priest-king Ramaket, looted from his hidden burial site by graverobbers. Among these treasures is a jeweled urn said to hold Ramaket's ashes. Yet also within the urn resides Ramaket's soul, which has been helplessly imprisoned in the vessel for millennia. In an adjacent gallery hangs a display featuring the mounted skeleton of an old blue dragon. The curator of the museum, a sorcerer, secretly cast *animate dead* on the skeleton to guard the treasures of the museum against thieves. Unbeknownst to the curator, the powerful will of Ramaket's entrapped soul has slowly begun influencing the necromantic magic animating his mindless guardian, gradually transforming the undead thing into a dracolich with the mind of the evil priest-king—the ancient urn serving as its phylactery. It is only a mater of time before the soul will have attained sufficient control of its new body to launch a second reign of Ramaket.

ALTERNATE DRACOLICHES

Not all dracoliches are true dragons. In fact, any creature with the dragon type can become one of these undead horrors, opening the door for dracolich wyverns, dragon turtles, and all manner of half-dragons. Surviving the process of becoming a dracolich is an incredibly painful and trying experience for a mortal spirit, and one that not even all dragons survive. Thus, while non-true dragon dracoliches do exist, they are incredibly rare. For an example, find Sakatha the Deathless, a half-black-dragon twelve-headed hydra dracolich in this issue's web enhancement available at **paizo.com/dragon**.

Dracolich Phylactery

AGE OF WORMS

by James Jacobs • illustrated by Eva Widermann

Wormfood

Surviving the Age of Worms Adventure Path

Becoming Epic Heroes

While the pages of *Dungeon* present everything a DM needs to run the Age of Worms Adventure Path, every month *Dragon* gives the players of that—or any other campaign—tools to enhance their gaming experience.

In "Dawn of a New Age," the final adventure in the campaign, your heroes stand an excellent chance of transcending the boundary between high-level and epic-level play. Certainly the villains you'll be facing in this final battle are epic-level threats. As the campaign comes to a close, your heroes join the ranks of the greatest of the land, and in some cases, might even be the most powerful members of their classes in the campaign world.

What does this mean, exactly? What is the difference between high-level play and epic-level play? Where do you go to level up your character once you gain your 210,000th experience point? What kind of benefits tailored specifically for the Age of Worms campaign should you seek out? This article provides you with what you need not only to face the Age of Worms endgame, but to carry on beyond the campaign into new regions of heroism and glory.

Epic Resources

The first thing you should do when your character becomes 21st level is to check out pages 206–210 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Here, you'll find a bare-bones primer for advancing into epic levels; these rules explain how your class features progress and give a small handful of feats to choose from.

The Complete books (*Complete Warrior*, *Complete Divine*, *Complete Arcane*, and *Complete Adventurer*) each feature sections at the end that expand this information, including numerous new feats to choose from.

Of course, the best place to go to for guidance and options with epic-level play is the *Epic Level Handbook*. If you use this book, be sure to check out the 3.5 rules update that Wizards of the Coast has available on their website at **wizards.com**.

Your First Epic Feat

When you reach 21st level, you qualify for your first epic feat. Unless your group intends to carry on the campaign after finishing "Dawn of a New Age," the feat you select will be your character's only epic feat. So choose wisely!

It goes without saying, in this case, that you should avoid selecting "gateway" feats that exist primarily to serve as prerequisites for higher-level feats. Likewise, certain feats have little to no use in the limited span of time you have remaining to play your character. For example, there's no sense in selecting Augmented Alchemy, since you probably won't have time to create many alchemical items during this last adventure.

Breaking down the types of classes into the classic four archetypes, the following epic feats (taken from the Complete books and the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) are your best choices.

Warrior: Barbarians, fighters, paladins, and other classes focused on combat who qualify for Overwhelming Critical might be tempted to take this feat, but since it only triggers when you make a critical hit and a lot of the foes in Age of Worms are undead, you should look to *Complete Warrior* for better epic feat choices. Feats like Armor Skin, Epic Prowess, and Epic Weapon Focus might seem minor, but that extra point to your Armor Class or your attack roll might save your life. Ranged weapon specialists should definitely check out Combat Archery, if only because a lot of high-level monsters have exceptional reach with their attacks, and being able to fire your weapon without worrying about attacks of opportunity is really nice. Perfect Two-Weapon Fighting is an excellent choice if you qualify, since it's always best to add a new attack to your full-attack actions.

Divine: Improved Spell Capacity is probably your best bet if you're a divine spellcaster, especially if your key ability score is high enough (30+) to grant you a bonus 10th-level spell. Being able to cast a quickened *greater dispel magic* or a quickened *heal* gives you a great advantage. Of course, if you don't have any metamagic feats, this feat is still useful since you can apply it to any spell level. There's quite a few evil outsiders left to fight as well, so Planar Turning isn't a bad choice (especially if you've picked up a lot of other feats to augment your turning checks). Bonus Domain is a good choice only if the granted domain is particularly useful at high level—gaining a larger spell selection really only makes things more complicated. And finally, although it's not an epic feat, you certainly can't go wrong with Persistent Spell from *Complete Arcane*, especially with spells like *aid*, *divine favor*, and *resist*

energy just begging to be augmented in this way.

Arcane: As far as spellcasting goes, arcane spellcasters benefit from Improved Spell Capacity and Persistent Spell as much as divine casters. If you have a familiar, Familiar Spell is a handy way to increase the number of spells you can effectively cast in that all-important first round of combat. If your spellcaster is into damage spells, Enhance Spell isn't a bad choice either.

Adventurer: Not every encounter in Age of Worms is built for combat; there are several places where characters with high Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and similar skills can turn the tide of battle with a single skill check. Feats like Epic Reputation or Epic Skill Focus can be invaluable to roguish characters. Feats like Improved Sneak Attack aren't that great (again, since many of the villains in Age of Worms are undead)—an adventurer who focuses on combat is better served by delving into some of the epic feats a combat class might take.

Epic Stunts

Of course, keeping track of your character's newfound power can be an epic stunt in and of itself. Note that in many cases, the use of these tactics applies even to standard high-level games, not just epic-level games.

Astral Projection: The ultimate in exploration spells. With *astral projection* you can engage your enemy with little to no risk to yourself, since if your astral body is killed, it vanishes and you awaken in your real body unharmed. This is also an excellent spell to use when you're heading into environments or up against enemies who can ruin your valuable gear. Astrally projecting characters really have only four major disadvantages. First, they can't enter areas warded by antimagic. Second, they can be dispelled. Third, you can still be ruined by effects that immobilize you without killing you (*flesh to stone*, *imprisonment*, and even *hold person*). Finally, if you use this tactic too much, you can bet your enemies come to expect it. Make sure to leave your real bodies in a well-defended place (such as Magepoint) so if the enemy tracks them down you'll at least have a few rounds to get back there to save them.

Death Ward: If you're buying magic, you can't go wrong with a wand of *death ward*, especially in an adventure that features a lot of undead.

Free Enhancement Bonuses: If you find yourself shopping for new weapons and armor, keep in mind that at high level paying for enhancement bonuses is wasting money if someone in your group can cast *greater magic weapon* or *magic vestment*. These spells take up lower-level spell slots that generally aren't as useful in high-level combat, so dedicating several spell slots to these spells can really make a difference if you and your friends are armed with +1 weapons loaded with all sorts of other abilities.

Heroes' Feast: This spell is invaluable for the immunity to fear and poison effects it grants.

Maze: This spell is great for getting a monster out of the way, but it doesn't work as well against really smart creatures. That said, it's also an excellent defensive spell. Cast on yourself or an ally, it whisks away your target from danger, giving him all the time he probably needs to recover from a near-death situation.

Mind Blank: Once you can cast this spell, you might as well simply reduce the number of 8th-level spells you can cast per day by one: you should *never* go out without this spell active. If you don't have *mind blank* handy, an excellent poor-man's alternative is *protection from evil*. It doesn't grant you the sweeping immunities *mind blank* does, but it does keep you from being controlled via dominate effects.

No Save Allowed: Focus on spells that don't allow saving throws. *Maze*, *forcecage*, and *Otto's irresistible dance* are the classic examples, but spells like *gate* and *summon monster* are also effective ways to use magic to damage creatures with really good saving throws.

FOR THE DM

With this Wormfood, the Age of Worms Adventure Path comes to a close. While you might wish to continue the campaign into the epic levels, you might be interested in a change of scenery. Far to the south, in the exotic port city of Sasserine, trouble is brewing. A noblewoman's parents lie dead, her brother has gone missing, and greedy creditors haunt her doorstep, ready to steal away her ancestral home. Yet in providing aid to this desperate woman, your PCs might unwittingly entangle themselves in a sinister plot to spread madness across the globe—a plot destined to send them to the infamous pirate city of Scuttlecove, the notorious Isle of Dread, and deep into the Abyss itself. Look for the first adventure of Adventure Path III: Savage Tide to begin in issue #139 of Dungeon.

Suit Up!: Before you head in to the last adventure, remember that you probably won't have a chance to fully utilize any magical gear you find. Put another way; make sure you're as well-equipped as you can be. Take a moment to look over your character's magic item body slots, if you see one that's empty, put something on! If you've got the money to spare, you can even pay double the normal price for an item that normally takes up a slot to make it a "slottless" item. Your DM might limit access to such items, and it's perfectly reasonable to assume that such non-standard items must be crafted to order, which might take up more time than you are willing or able to wait.

Time Stop: This spell's use for mid-combat recovery is unparalleled. A character with *time stop* can take his 1d4+1 rounds of free actions to heal himself, re-apply defensive spells, or simply find better ground to continue the battle. Spending those 1d4+1 rounds to summon monsters around your enemy is also a good idea.

by Andy Collins • illustrated by Andrew Hou

OFFICIAL ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

In honor of this month's theme, the Sage takes on questions primarily dealing with matters of a draconic nature. Send the Sage your questions at **sageadvice@paizo.com.**

Does a dragon's crush attack provoke attacks of opportunity when it enters its targets' squares? What about if its targets have reach weapons? What about when the dragon moves away after the crush attack?

No, maybe, and yes.

The initial crush attack does not provoke attacks of opportunity, even though the dragon is entering enemy spaces.

Assuming the dragon has to move up to its targets to deliver the crush attack, enemies with reach get attacks of opportunity if the dragon leaves threatened squares. It's not the crush attack that provokes, but the dragon's movement.

When the dragon moves away after the crush attack, it provokes attacks of opportunity as normal for movement.

Can a dragon use its breath weapon as an attack of opportunity?

No. Only melee attacks may be used as attacks of opportunity.

Can a dragon's breath weapon harm a golem?

Yes. Although the golem main entry describes "immunity to magic" as granting immunity to "most magical and supernatural effects," individual golem entries clearly state that it applies only to "any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance." Thus, golems are affected normally by a dragon's breath weapon unless the golem's entry states otherwise.

Can or do creatures other than dragons have overland travel speeds?

The overland travel speeds listed for dragons in the *Monster Manual* are a special ability of dragons. Other creatures could potentially be created with a similar quality, but it would have to be included in the creature's description.

Dragons are immune to sleep and paralysis effects. Does this include "unconsciousness" effects, such as from drow poison or a *color spray* spell?

No. Both sleep and paralysis effects create specific conditions defined in the rules (although the "sleeping" condition created by most sleep effects is typically defined in the effect, rather than the glossary). Unconsciousness is an entirely different condition, and dragons are not immune to becoming unconscious.

Can a dragon use wands and scrolls of the cleric spells it's allowed to cast as arcane spells? What about spells from the domains it can cast as arcane spells?

Yes, no, and maybe.

Many dragons can cast cleric spells and spells from certain domains as arcane spells. Effectively, these spells are added to the dragon's sorcerer spell list as arcane spells. This means that it can activate spell trigger items (such as wands and staffs) containing such spells.

Scrolls, however, always have a type of magic (arcane or divine) inherent to them. A dragon who can learn and cast cleric or domain spells as arcane spells can't use a divine scroll with such a spell on it, any more than a wizard could use a divine scroll of *dispel magic* (even though it's on her spell list).

If a dragon with racial access to domain spells takes a cleric level, can it pick from the domains it has racial access to in addition to those granted by its deity? Does it gain any special benefit if it selects a domain that it already has access to from its dragon kind?

No. Racial access to a domain allows a dragon to learn and cast spells from that domain as if they were sorcerer spells, but doesn't allow any access to that domain for other purposes, nor does it grant any special stacking benefit if the dragon later gains the domain from cleric levels or any other feature.

Does a dragon with Power Attack add twice the number subtracted from attack rolls to damage rolls when making a tail slap?

No. While it shares some mathematical similarity to a two-handed weapon, the tail slap (or any other natural weapon that adds 1-1/2 the creature's Strength bonus on damage rolls) doesn't gain any other benefits applied to the use of a two-handed weapon.

Can a dragon wear magic rings, cloaks, bracers, and so on built by and for humanoids? Can it wield rods, staves, wands, or weapons? If it can, does it have to take off or put away its

equipment when it changes forms using alternate form, or do the items it wishes to use in its new form remain intact and useable through its transformation?

As described in an earlier Sage Advice column (issue #337), most magic items can be worn by any creature that has an appropriate body part upon which to wear it, regardless of the creature's (or the item's) normal size. *Draconomicon* has a sidebar dedicated to precisely this topic (page 24); basically, the answer is that a dragon can wear or use just about any magic item other than armor (unless it's specially made for the dragon, of course).

A dragon using alternate form would follow the normal rules for *polymorph* to determine whether items remain on its body or meld into its new form (see the *alter self* spell on page 197 of the *Player's Handbook* and new errata for *polymorph* and similar effects at **wizards.com/dnd**).

Does a dragon use its HD or its sorcerer caster level as the caster level for alternate form?

As noted on page 315 in the *Monster Manual*, supernatural abilities (such as the dragon's alternate form) have "an effective caster level equal to the creature's Hit Dice" unless otherwise noted. The "Caster Level" column on each dragon's "Abilities by Age" table applies to its sorcerer spellcasting ability and its spell-like abilities (see page 69 of the *Monster Manual*).

A very young silver dragon (Constitution 15) uses alternate form to take the form of an average elf (Constitution 8). He takes 4 points of Constitution damage. When he changes back to his natural form, does the Constitution damage remain? What if he takes elf form again—does his Constitution become normal for an average elf again (8), or does the damage still remain?

Alternate form doesn't eliminate any penalties, damage, or drain currently affecting your ability scores. The dragon with 4 points of Constitution damage would have Constitution 11 in dragon form and Constitution 4 in elf form until the damage was removed.

If you cast *resurrection* on dragonhide armor does the dragon come back to life?

Yes. The *resurrection* spell states that "so long as some small portion of the creature's body still exists, it can be *resurrected*" and that "the condition of the remains is not a factor." It would be up to the DM to determine the age and kind of the dragon resulting from such a spell, using the guidelines for minimum size required to make the armor in question (see page 284 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

The same would apply to any object crafted from part of a living creature, such as leather or hide armor, a necklace of boar tusks, or a cloak made from the fur of a dire weasel.

What are the rules for leaping onto the back of a dragon? What about leaping onto the back of a flying dragon (such as from off a *carpet of flying*)?

Assuming you're not talking about leaping onto the back of your dragon mount (which is covered by the Ride skill), you're in uncharted territory. A Jump check seems like a good start (you must jump high enough or far enough to get into position), and after that it seems like you're doing something much like initiating a grapple (a dragon who doesn't want you on its back should get a chance to resist your attempt).

Whenever you're trying something that doesn't seem covered in the game rules, start by looking for existing rules that mimic what you're attempting, rather than simply creating a new rule from scratch. You may well find that existing rules for similar actions get you most of the way there.

Do I have to use the Leadership feat or the Dragon Cohort feat for my 15th-level paladin to gain a juvenile celestial bronze dragon (CR 9 + 2 with celestial template) as his mount? Or can I gain a draconic mount without making him a cohort?

There's nothing stopping your DM from allowing you to gain a draconic mount (or any other kind of cohort, follower, or ally) without spending a feat. The feats are there to provide mechanical guidelines for DMs and players who aren't comfortable adjudicating such things on the fly.

Are the epic rules for advancement by prestige classes different for dragons? Some prestige classes for dragons in *Draconomicon* effectively require the dragon to be epic but still list base attack bonus and base save progressions. Are those values used instead of the epic attack and save bonus progressions described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*? And if so, does this let dragon characters (or half-dragon characters) break the normal limit of base attack and save bonuses?

The prestige classes in *Draconomicon* are special exceptions to the normal limits on base attack and save bonuses listed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. While they are designed for monsters, any character of the dragon type who meets the prerequisites is technically allowed to take levels in these classes, and thus exceed the normal limit on base attack and save bonuses.

DMs who want to avoid this headache are encouraged to adopt either or both of the following house rules:

1) The classes are available only to true dragons (not simply to creatures of the dragon type); or
2) The base attack and base save bonus progressions listed only apply to characters who haven't already reached ECL 20. In some cases (such as the bloodscaled fury, which requires the creature to already have a base attack bonus above +20), this means that the entire progression is effectively eliminated.

Does a paladin's mount share the paladin's non-spell special abilities, such as immunity to fear?

No. A paladin's mount can use the paladin's base save bonuses, and the paladin can have any spell (but not any spell-like ability) she casts on herself also affect the mount, but this doesn't extend to other special abilities.

Do goliaths (from *Races of Stone*) have darkvision? The *Monster Manual* says that monstrous humanoids have darkvision unless stated otherwise, but *Races of Stone* doesn't say one way or the other.

Yes. Ideally, the goliath description should have reiterated this, but since it doesn't state otherwise, it can safely be assumed that goliaths have darkvision.

Can a dwarf wearing medium or heavy armor or carrying a medium or heavy load use the Tumble skill?

Yes. Thanks to the dwarven racial ability to move at full speed even when armored or encumbered, the character's speed hasn't been "reduced by armor, excess equipment, or loot" (*Player's Handbook*, page 84), so he's free to use the Tumble skill. Of course, he still suffers an armor check penalty for either the armor or the load (whichever is worse).

Dragon

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by Hal Maclean • illustrated by Steve Ellis

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

For every hero born to stride through the sunlit fields of valor there lurks another who lives within the shadows. Cunning and anonymous, he shuns the clash of blades. He devotes endless hours to his craft and embraces discretion as his highest virtue. Those who follow this path learn to strike at their foes' most vulnerable points and bear many different names—rogues, ninjas, even spellthieves—but regardless of the title all share one common trait: an almost supernatural ability to topple the mighty with a single well-timed, perfectly placed blow.

A few such shadow stalkers, the elite of the elite, regard the training in their professions as merely the first step. Delving deeply into the mysteries of anatomy and physiology, they uncover startling insights into the workings of the mortal body and learn myriad ways to lay low their enemies.

Unless otherwise noted, any reference to sneak attack also includes skirmish, sudden strike, and any other class ability that allows a character to make a precision-based attack that deals extra dice of damage.

Ambush Feats

Ambush feats allow you to use your sneak attack to deal some other, additional, disability upon an opponent at the cost of one or more of the extra damage dice you normally deal with a successful hit. You must declare your intent to use an ambush feat's ability before making your attack roll and you must deal at least one extra die of damage with the attack. You may apply multiple ambush feats to the same attack so long as you still deal at least one extra die of damage with the attack. Creatures immune to sneak attacks are immune to the secondary effects created by ambush feats.

Burning Link [Ambush]

You can harm creatures possessing a mystical connection to your opponent.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (arcana) 1 rank, Knowledge (nature) 1 rank, sneak attack +3d6.

Benefit: By reducing your sneak attack damage by two damage dice, you can deal sneak attack damage to a creature linked with your target from a class ability—such as a druid or ranger's animal companion, a sorcerer or wizard's familiar, or a paladin's special mount. Only your sneak attack damage (that which remains after subtracting two dice to use this feat) applies, and that damage only affects the target's linked creature—not your target. The base damage of your weapon, your Strength bonus, poison, and similar types of damage do not transfer and apply to your target normally. A creature has a special connection to your target if it gains Hit Dice, hit points, or other abilities due to the target's level. Creatures of a type normally immune to sneak attack damage (such as constructs or undead) are immune to the effects of this feat.

Dazzling Strike [Ambush]

Your attack reflects light into your opponent's face, leaving him with watering eyes and cringing from the light.

Prerequisite: Sneak attack +2d6.

Benefit: By reducing your sneak attack damage by one damage die, your attack leaves your opponent dazzled for 1 round. If you reduce

your sneak attack damage by more than the one die, the duration of the dazzle effect increases by 1 round per damage die reduction. You and your foe must both be in an area of bright illumination for you to make use of this feat.

Eldritch Erosion [Ambush]

You can weaken your opponents' ability to withstand magical threats.

Prerequisite: Sneak attack +3d6.

Benefit: By reducing your sneak attack damage by two damage dice you can reduce the target's spell resistance by 5 (minimum 1) for 1 minute. Multiple attacks made with this feat do not stack. Each use of this feat begins the 1 minute duration anew.

Flurry of Throws [Ambush]

When you catch opponents unawares you can unleash a storm of shuriken striking at their most vulnerable points.

Prerequisites: Dex 13, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (shuriken), Acrobatics, sudden strike +4d6.

Benefit: As part of a full-round attack using Rapid Shot, you can throw additional shuriken by reducing your sudden strike damage. You make every attack in the round with a –2 penalty. For each die by which you reduce your sudden strike damage you gain one additional attack and you deal your remaining damage dice to each target struck by the additional attacks gained from this ability. You can sacrifice up to three bonus damage dice to gain three extra attacks in a round. Each target of a shuriken attack must be vulnerable to your sudden strike (i.e., does not currently have a Dexterity bonus to AC), and each shuriken you throw in this way must target a different creature. Other attacks you make as part of your full attack action that are not extra attacks from Rapid Shot or Flurry of Throws do not have to be made with shuriken, and they do not gain bonus sudden strike damage.

For example, a 13th-level ninja uses Rapid Shot and Flurry of Throws to make six attacks (two normal attacks plus one Rapid Shot attack plus three Flurry of Throws attacks). The ninja's attacks have the following base attack bonuses (counting only his base attack bonus and penalties for attacking more than once in a round): +6/+1/+6/+6/+6/+6. His three Flurry of Throws attacks deal normal shuriken damage plus 4d6 points of sudden strike damage and must be made against three different foes who lack their Dexterity bonuses to AC and are thus susceptible to sudden strike damage.

Hinder [Ambush]

Your attack leaves your opponent limping in pain.

Prerequisites: Improved Initiative, skirmish +2d6.

Benefit: By reducing your skirmish damage by one damage die, you can reduce your target's base land speed by up to 10 feet for 1 minute. Multiple attacks made with this feat stack, but you cannot reduce a creature's base land speed below 5 feet. This feat does not affect any other type of movement, such as flying or climbing.

Special: A scout may take Hinder as one of her scout bonus feats (see page 13 of *Complete Adventurer*).

Lacerate [Ambush]

With a single viper-swift blow you strike and temporarily paralyze your opponent's hand.

Prerequisites: Str 13, Int 13, Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Painful Strike, Power Attack, sneak attack +4d6.

Benefit: By reducing your sneak attack damage by three damage dice, you can make a melee attack that causes your target to lose the use of one of his hands (your choice) for 1 minute. Your target can make a Fortitude save to resist (DC 10 + 1/2 your level + damage dealt). If he fails the save he drops whatever he is holding in that hand, cannot use two-handed weapons, and he may not engage in any action that requires the use of both hands (such as using the Climb or Use Rope skills).

Special: This feat only affects living creatures able to feel pain.

Painful Strike [Ambush]

Your attack causes your opponent intense agony.

Prerequisites: Str 13, Power Attack, sneak attack +3d6.

Benefit: By reducing your sneak attack damage by two damage dice, you can strike to cause your target intense, throbbing pain. This pain imposes a –2 penalty on attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks for 1 minute.

Special: This feat only affects living creatures able to feel pain.

Ring the Ear [Ambush]

A mighty buffet leaves your opponent reeling and his ears buzzing.

Prerequisites: Improved Unarmed Strike, sneak attack +2d6.

Benefit: By reducing your sneak attack damage by one damage die you can make a special unarmed strike attack that forces your target to make a Fortitude save (DC 10 +1/2 your class level + your Str modifier). If your target fails this save he loses the ability to hear for 1 minute.

Weaken the Heart [Ambush]

Your attack leaves your opponent gasping for air and watching spots dance before his eyes.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +4, sneak attack +3d6.

Benefit: By reducing your sneak attack damage by two damage dice you can make a special melee attack targeting your foe's vital organs that forces your target to make a Fortitude save (DC 10 +1/2 your class level + your Int modifier). If your target fails this save, at any time in the next 10 minutes that he attempts to make a Strength-, Dexterity-, or Constitution-based skill check or on ability checks using one of these scores he becomes fatigued. If already fatigued he becomes exhausted instead.

by Richard Farrese • illustrated by Steve Ellis

THE ANAGAKOK

Most primitive societies have sorcerers, shamans, or witch doctors among their ranks, but a lesser-known tradition of cunning arcanists has existed for thousands of years. Found among some of the most barbaric tribes of the world, those who learn this magical discipline do not rely on instincts, personal magnetism, or divinity to weave their magic. Instead, much like the wizards of more civilized societies, they learn their mysterious craft by rote and study their spells each day, using their superior intellects to master the peculiar power of the arcane. Those who follow this path are called anagakoks.

An anagakok (*ah nah GA kawk*) is an alternative specialist wizard from a primitive society. Born and raised in nature and bound by the traditions of an ancient people, an anagakok has great respect for and control over the environment in which he lives. From an early age, he learns to master the art of survival in the most extreme conditions. Many of his spells grant him a measure of control over animals and plants, and others allow him to move through nature unhindered or unseen. Although he does not necessarily worship deities associated with the wilderness and the source of his power comes from arcane forces rather than from the divine, an anagakok attracts the attention of many lesser spirits of the wild. These fickle beings bestow special boons on the anagakok that make him unnaturally lucky. The members of his tribe regard him as someone who brings good fortune to the people. Most of his tribesmen cling to the belief that a guardian spirit possesses this mysterious magic weaver.

The anagakok is especially concerned with the wellbeing of his tribe. He helps gather food, finds safe shelter in times of crisis, and defends tribesmates against sometimes impossible odds. Because of his connection to nature and the useful spells he can cast, the anagakok is a vital member of his society. Nevertheless, like many wizards the anagakok is often attracted to a life of adventure and exploration. When an anagakok chooses to become an adventurer, he travels the world seeking to perfect his art.

An adventuring anagakok can be of valuable assistance to any party. Because his magic is especially useful in the wild, he is a great addition to

any group that lacks a druid or ranger in its ranks, as well as to any party that specializes in wilderness exploration. A versatile character, the anagakok is not lost in environments unknown to him—such as in great cities.

The anagakok originally appeared as a kit in second edition's *Complete Wizard's Handbook*.

Alignment: Any. Although an anagakok is rarely lawful, he can be of any alignment.

Hit Die: d4.

Game Rule Information

The anagakok is a variant wizard. Unless otherwise noted, an anagakok advances in the same manner as a wizard (same base attack bonus, saving throw bonuses, skill points, and so on). When a character elects to take a level of wizard or anagakok, he may not later take levels in the other class. This prevents the character from gaining the benefits of a 1st-level wizard twice.

An anagakok can prepare as many spells per day a regular specialist.

Class Skills: In addition to those of the standard wizard, the anagakok also has Survival as a class skill.

Spellbooks: Just like a wizard, an anagakok must study his spellbook each day to prepare his spells. He cannot prepare any spell not recorded in his spellbook, except for *read magic*, which all anagakoks can prepare from memory. An anagakok's spellbook is usually made from crudely cut layers of bark. Some anagakoks even carve the formulas for their spells on stone, tree roots, or other materials found in nature, but most prefer bark because it is lighter and easier to write on.

School Specialization: An anagakok is a specialist wizard (see page 57 of the *Player's Handbook*) specializing in a distinctive school of magic unique to anagakoks. Unlike typical wizard schools, the anagakok's school of magic regroups spells especially useful to survival in harsh environmental conditions as well as spells affecting nature in general. As such, the anagakok school of magic allows him to cast spells not typically available to other wizards (i.e., not on the wizard spell list). As a type of specialist wizard, an anagakok can prepare one additional spell of this specialty school per spell level each day, as normal. These spells go on the anagakok's spell list, allowing him to prepare them in any spell slot. He also gains a +2 bonus on Spellcraft checks to learn spells of this school. The anagakok's prohibited schools are always illusion and necromancy, and he may never learn or cast spells from them. An anagakok cannot become a specialist in any other school.

The anagakok's school includes the following spells.

Level	*Spells*
0	*create water, know direction, purify food and drink*
1st	*calm animals, charm animal, detect animals or plants, detect snares and pits, longstrider, pass without trace*
2nd	*animal trance, hold animal, reduce animal, wood shape*
3rd	*diminish plants, dominate animal, neutralize poison, quench, snare*
4th	*antiplant shell, command plants, repel vermin, rusting grasp*
5th	*awaken, commune with nature, control winds, tree stride*
6th	*find the path, repel wood, stone tell, transport via plants*
7th	*animate plants, transmute metal to wood, windwalk*
8th	*animal shapes, control plants, repel metal or stone*
9th	*elemental swarm, regenerate, shambler*

Illiteracy: With the exception of arcane spell formulas, the anagakok cannot read or write. He may spend 2 skill points to gain the ability to read and write all languages he is able to speak.

An anagakok who gains a level in any other class except barbarian automatically gains literacy. Any other character who gains an anagakok level does not lose the literacy he already had.

Spontaneous Casting: An anagakok can channel stored spell energy into an *endure elements* spell the anagakok did not prepare ahead of time. The anagakok can "lose" any prepared spell of 1st level or higher that is not his specialist bonus spell in order to cast *endure elements*.

Wilderness Lore: An anagakok is learned in the ways of nature. He gains a +2 bonus on Knowledge (nature) and on Survival checks.

Good Fortune: The anagakok is well regarded by the many spirits that inhabit the wilderness and begins to attract their attention early in his career. Blessed by the spirits of nature, he gains a number of good fortune points he can apply (as an immediate action) to any die roll to gain a luck bonus equal to the number of points he expends. At 1st level, he receives 2 good fortune points per day, and this number increases by 2 more points at 5th level and every five levels thereafter. The anagakok may spread out his good fortune points to add bonuses to a number of rolls, checks, or saving throws or expend them all on a single die roll. As a readied action, the anagakok may also choose to expend his good fortune points to grant a luck bonus on the roll of an ally he can touch.

THE ANAGAKOK

Level	Special
1st	Good fortune 2 points, illiteracy, spontaneous casting, wilderness lore
2nd	
3rd	
4th	
5th	Good fortune 4 points
6th	
7th	
8th	
9th	
10th	Good fortune 6 points
11th	
12th	
13th	
14th	
15th	Good fortune 8 points
16th	
17th	
18th	
19th	
20th	Good fortune 10 points

by Joshua Cole • illustrated by Steve Ellis

DIVINE

DEVOTEES OF THE DRAGON

To many of the lesser species with which they share the Material Plane, dragons are beings of almost deific might and immortal lifespan. Some humanoids even go so far as to worship dragons as a group or focus on one specific dragon.

Of the major breeds of true dragon, two groups actively solicit worshipers: Arrogant chromatic dragons delight in presenting themselves as divine beings, while the serpentine lung dragons actually are deific spirits of the Celestial Bureaucracy and expect veneration as a matter of course. Gem dragons are more likely to tutor monks or members of the psionic classes, but sometimes accrue followers with divine spellcasting ability. Even the noble metallic dragons are not entirely immune to the supreme flattery of worship—nor do they necessarily know of (or care enough to correct) humanoids who consider them deities.

DRACONIC DOMAINS

A cleric may pay homage to dragons in general by selecting the Dragon domain (see *Spell Compendium*, page 273), but a true devotee of the dragon supplements these broader draconic spells with magic inspired by the particular type he venerates: Chromatic, Gem, Lung, or Metallic. These domains may be taken alone or in conjunction with the Dragon domain.

Chromatic dragons usually compel worship through terror. Red and white dragons in particular delight in the abject submission of their followers. Blue dragons sometimes rule expansive theocracies, using the devotions of their adherents less to stroke their egos and more to control masses of subjects.

Gem dragons rarely seek out followers, but when they acquire worshipers they do not necessarily object to being seen as deities. A gem dragon rarely interacts with its devotees directly, but it might serve as an inspirational figure to primitive psionic humanoids.

Many shamans (see *Oriental Adventures*, page 22) select the Lung Dragon domain as part of their veneration of the wider spirit world. A cleric who worships a lung dragon tends to live with the misapprehension that the object of his devotions is a singularly divine entity.

Metallic dragons are, as a rule, too honest to accept open worship. A few, however, placing the greater good (and, perhaps, their own draconic egos) ahead of personal honor, do teach would-be clerics how to use their dragon-inspired powers for good.

In addition to humanoid worshipers, some dragons take levels in cleric and adopt the appropriate draconic domains. wing lists define the four draconic domains. Spells marked with "SC" are from the *Spell Compendium.*

Chromatic Dragon

Granted Power: Choose a chromatic dragon color. You cannot later change the kind of dragon. Once per day, you may use a breath weapon similar to the chosen dragon's. This breath weapon deals 1d6 points of damage per five cleric levels you possess. A successful Reflex save (DC 10 + 1/2 your cleric level + your Charisma modifier) halves the damage. A black breathes a 60-foot line of acid, a blue breathes a 60-foot line of electricity, a green breathes a 30-foot cone of acid, a red breathes a 30-foot cone of fire, and a white breathes 30-foot cone of cold.

Chromatic Dragon Domain Spells

1 **Cause Fear:** One creature of 5 HD or less flees for 1d4 rounds.
2 **Gust of Wind:** Blows away or knocks down smaller creatures.
3 **Claws of Darkness** [SC]: Claws deal 1d8 cold damage and have reach.
4 **Fear:** Subjects within cone flee for 1 round/level.
5 **Rebuking Breath** [SC]: Your breath weapon rebukes undead.
6 **Symbol of Fear** [M]: Triggered rune panics nearby creatures.
7 **Aura of Terror** [SC]: You gain an aura of fear, or your frightful presence becomes more effective.
8 **Stunning Breath, Greater** [SC]: Your breath weapon also stuns creatures for 2d4 rounds.
9 **Weird:** As *phantasmal killer,* but affects all within 30 ft.

Gem Dragon

Granted Power: Add Autohypnosis, Knowledge (psionics), and Psicraft to your list of cleric class skills.

Gem Dragon Domain Spells

1 **True Strike:** +20 on your next attack roll.
2 **Detect Thoughts:** Allows "listening" to surface thoughts.
3 **Mesmerizing Glare** [SC]: Your gaze fascinates creatures.
4 **Suggestion:** Compels subject to follow stated course of action.
5 **Dragonsight** [SC, F]: Gain low-light vision, darkvision and blindsense.
6 **Probe Thoughts** [SC]: Read subject's memories, one question/round.
7 **True Seeing** [M]: Lets you see all things as they really are.
8 **Mind Blank:** Subject is immune to mental/emotional magic and scrying.
9 **Foresight:** "Sixth sense" warns of impending danger.

Lung Dragon

Granted Power: You gain a +2 competence bonus on Charisma-based skill checks and Charisma checks against creatures of the dragon type or spirit subtype. This bonus increases to +4 against dragon (spirit) creatures.

Lung Dragon Domain Spells

1 **Unseen Servant:** Invisible force obeys your commands.
2 **Fog Cloud:** Fog obscures vision.
3 **Sign of Sealing** [SC, M]: Magical sigil protects door or chest, deals 1d4/level (max 10d4) if opened.
4 **Air Walk:** Subject treads on air as if solid (climb at a 45° angle).
5 **Draconic Might** [SC]: Gain +5 to Str, Con, Cha; +4 natural armor; immunity to magic sleep and paralysis effects.
6 **Sign of Sealing, Greater** [SC, M]: Magical sigil protects door or chest, deals 1d6/level (max 20d6) if opened.
7 **Control Weather:** Changes weather in local area.
8 **Polymorph Any Object:** Changes subject into anything else.
9 **Meteor Swarm:** Four exploding spheres each deal 6d6 fire damage.

Draconic Domains Without the Spell Compendium

All four draconic domains include spells from the *Spell Compendium.* If you lack access to that book you can substitute appropriate spells from the *Player's Handbook* or other supplements. Chromatic dragon spells tend to revolve around breath weapons and fear effects. Gem dragon spells are primarily enchantments and divinations that mimic psionic powers. Lung dragon spells chiefly involve nature, the elements (especially air and water), mutability, and warding areas or items. Metallic dragon spells emphasize those involving metal, personal protective spells, and spells for bargaining with dragons.

Metallic Dragon

Granted Power: You gain damage reduction 1/adamantine. This increases by 1 per five cleric levels.

Metallic Dragon Domain Spells

1 **Vision of Glory** [SC]: Subject gains morale bonus equal to your Cha modifier to one saving throw.
2 **Shield Other:** You take half of sub ject's damage.
3 **Diamondsteel** [SC, M]: Metal armor provides damage reduction.
4 **Protection from Energy:** Absorb 12 points/level of damage from one kind of energy.
5 **Globe of Invulnerability, Lesser:** Stops 1st- through 3rd-level spells.
6 **Wall of Iron:** 30 hp/four levels, can topple onto foes.
7 **Ironguard** [SC, F]: Subject becomes immune to all metal weapons.
8 **Iron Body:** Your body becomes living iron.
9 **Dragon Ally, Greater** [SC, XP]: As *lesser dragon ally,* but up to 21 HD. (Metallic dragons only.)

by Amber E. Scott. • illustrated by Steve Ellis

HUNTING THE WYRM

WARRIOR

A brave man and a fool entered a room, and found himself alone.
—Proverb

Some claim a dragon hunter possesses courage in excess of the average person, for he marches into the lairs of the most dangerous creatures in existence. Others claim dragon hunters are the greatest idiots in the world—for the same reasons.

Carapace Vest

Elven dragon hunters crafted these items after one sage accidentally stepped on a beetle, then lifted his foot to find the insect unharmed. Craftsmen make these vests out of flexible strips of wood, coated multiple times with sap-derived resin. When worn, the carapace vest fits over light or medium armor and forms a bubble of air between the vest and the wearer's chest.

A carapace vest protects the wearer from the worst of a dragon's crush attack. The wearer takes half damage from the dragon's initial crush attack, as the carapace vest shields him from internal injuries. In addition, the protection afforded by the carapace vest allows the wearer to catch his breath and muster a concentrated effort to escape from the dragon's pin, granting him a +4 bonus on his next grapple check (provided that check is made to escape the dragon's pin). After the first round of damage, though, the carapace vest breaks and becomes useless.

Liquid Courage

It should be no surprise that dwarves were the first to distill this potent alcoholic beverage with courage-boosting properties. Dwarves refuse to reveal the exact ingredients, but researchers believe the drink is distilled from several varieties of fungus, including one with hallucinogenic properties.

A character who imbibes a glass of liquid courage feels brave and arrogant. The bolstering effects of liquid courage last for 1 hour and provides the drinker with a +2 alchemical bonus on saving throws against extraordinary fear effects (such as a dragon's frightful presence) and a –2 penalty on Dexterity checks and Dexterity-based skill checks.

A bottle of liquid courage holds enough for five glasses.

Plate Thinner

This clear, turpentinelike liquid softens hard organic matter, such as teeth, bones, and scales.

A ranged touch attack is required to saturate the dragon with plate thinner. On a successful hit, the dragon's scales become softer and more permeable.

A dose of plate thinner, which comes in large glass bottles, affects a Medium dragon for 1 minute, after which time its scales dry and harden. During that time, however, any critical hits scored by rolling a natural 20 against the dragon increase their damage multiplier by 1 (thus, a weapon that normally deals ×2 damage instead deals ×3 damage).

Two doses are required to coat a Large dragon, with four for a Huge, eight for a Gargantuan, and sixteen for a Colossal.

Plate thinner affects any creature of the dragon type or reptilian subtype with a natural armor bonus.

Snout Snare

A gnome inventor discovered that webbing from giant spiders made an incredibly strong, sticky rope when treated with the proper chemicals. He then added a sliding pole, creating the first snout snare.

A snout snare is a 10-foot-long pole topped with a giant hoop holding open a massive lasso. The pole telescopes to 20 feet in length and a sliding lever tightens the noose. A snout snare requires two hands to use properly.

The wielder uses a snout snare to lasso a dragon's snout, pinning its jaws shut and rendering it unable to use its breath weapon or bite attack. As most dragons are exceptionally powerful, snout snares only inconvenience the beasts for a short time. In dragon hunting, though, every second counts.

A snout snare has a reach of up to 15 feet and can be used against an adjacent foe as well. The wielder must successfully grapple the dragon with the snout snare (this particular grapple attempt does not provoke an attack of opportunity) and achieve a hold. The snout snare allows the wielder to successfully hold a creature of any size, although it deals no damage. Most wielders drop the pole after successfully snaring a dragon's snout. Alternatively, the wielder can choose to keep hold of the pole and try to control the dragon. In that case, the dragon and the wielder make opposed Strength checks each round as free actions. If the dragon wins the opposed Strength check it can move as it wills. If the wielder wins, the dragon remains snared and cannot move farther than the pole's reach.

To break free of the snout snare, a dragon can attempt a DC 17 Strength check (DC 21 for masterwork snout snares) as a free action once per round. The dragon can also elect to use a standard action to automatically remove the snout snare as long as it can use its front claws. A dragon three or more size categories larger than the snout snare's wielder and who succeeds on its opposed Strength check can fly, swim, or move normally, even if the wielder continues to dangle from the snare's pole.

If used as a weapon to strike a creature, the snout snare breaks apart on a successful hit and deals no damage.

Sugar Bomb

Once scholars uncovered the draconic dislike for things that taste sweet (see *Draconomicon*, page 18), alchemists (particularly gnome and halfling alchemists, who seemed to have a knack for such things) went to work trying to uncover ways of utilizing that particular draconic weakness.

A sugar bomb is exactly that: a poorly constructed sack of flimsy paper or parchment filled with sugar. Recent sugar bombs contain pockets of sticky alchemical goo as well, to help the sugar adhere to the dragon's tongue. The sugar bomb's wielder must make a ranged attack to hit the dragon's mouth (a target up to three size categories smaller than the dragon, but no smaller than Fine) directly with the sugar bomb. A dragon hit by a sugar bomb loses its blindsense ability for 1d6 rounds. When faced with a dragon lacking blindsense, characters can make Hide and Move Silently checks normally, opposed only by the dragon's Spot and Listen checks.

Wing Clips

A wise old orc woman invented these dragon hunting staples when a fierce adult red terrorized her clan. She set the clan's warriors to crafting steel-toothed clamps like narrow bear traps. The next time the dragon swooped low, the orcs, threw the clamps onto its back, pulling it from the sky.

Wing clips measure 3 feet in diameter when open. It takes a move action to ready a wing clip. Throwing one is a ranged attack with a 10-foot range increment. A wing clip is an exotic weapon, and because of the item's awkwardness it imposes a further –2 penalty on all attack rolls made with it (thus, a nonproficient user takes a –6 penalty on his attack roll with a wing clip). On a failed attempt, the wing clip snaps shut but does not penetrate the dragon's tough hide; the clip bounces off and must be reset (most wing clips come with a 100-foot trailing cord so the thrower can easily retrieve the clip).

On a successful ranged attack, a wing clip clamps down on a dragon's wing and impairs its flight ability. Dragons are lighter than land-bound creatures of their size, but they still require a great deal of power and momentum to lift them off the ground. A single wing clip reduces the dragon's fly speed by 30 feet and decreases its maneuverability by one category. Additional wing clips slow the dragon by 30 feet each and reduce its maneuverability by an additional category (to a minimum of clumsy). A dragon can no longer fly if its movement is reduce to 0 feet. Dragons smaller than Medium cannot be affected by wing clips (they are too small), while Medium and larger dragons can be affected by a number of wing clips equal to one plus one per size category larger than Medium (minimum of one for each wing). Dragons without wings are immune to wing clips.

A dragon can remove one wing clip with a standard action or all wing clips attached to it as a full-round action. Wing clips can affect any creature that flies with wings (as opposed to magical flight, such as that possessed by beholders).

DRAGON-HUNTING GEAR

Item	Cost	Weight	Craft Skill	Craft DC
Carapace vest	35 gp	10 lb.	Armorsmithing	15
Liquid courage, bottle	50 gp	1–1/2 lb.	Alchemy	20
Liquid courage, glass	10 gp	—	Alchemy	20
Plate thinner	25 gp	2 lb.	Alchemy	20
Snout snare	30 gp	6 lb.	Weaponsmithing	18
Snout snare, masterwork	80 gp	5 lb.	Weaponsmithing	20
Snout snare, replacement lasso	7 gp	1 lb.	Weaponsmithing	10
Sugar bomb	1 gp	—	Alchemy	10
Wing clip	40 gp	14 lb.	Weaponsmithing	18

Nodwick

by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com

Nothing is ever a complete failure. It can always be used as a bad example.

UH, HEY, THERE. I'M HERE TO HELP YOU GUYS.
GRRAGGH!
GRRAGGH?!
WELL, I WOULDN'T EAT ME IF I WERE YOU. THERE ARE A BUNCH OF ADVENTURERS HEADED THIS WAY AND I'M GOING TO HELP YOU DEFEND YOUR... SLIME-INFESTED CAVE AND WHATEVER VALUABLES YOU MAY HAVE.
GRRAGGH. GRAGGH-GRAGGH.
ME? OH, THEY, UH, BETRAYED ME... A LOT. AND STUFF.
SO, UM, FIE ON THEM AND ALL HUMAN KIND. AND ALL THAT.
GRRAGGH?
OH, I STOLE THIS MAGIC SWORD OF VORPAL VEG-O-MATIC. IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE QUITE THE HANDY HACKING HARDWARE.
OH, BETRAYER OF HUMANS! I SEE YOU HAVE FOUND HEARTS AS BLACK AS YOURS AT LAST!
UM, YEAH. PREPARE TO TASTE MY BLADE OF SLICING DOOM, ER, VARLET!
KA-MASSACRE!
SO WHY DID THIS WORK, AGAIN?
SIMPLE. SO OFTEN, WHEN ONE OF US MESSES UP CATASTROPHICALLY, IT SPELLS DEFEAT FOR THE WHOLE PARTY. NODWICK IS SO INEXPERIENCED WITH SWORDS IT WAS LIKE GIVING A LOADED CROSSBOW TO A WOODCHUCK.
SO BY HAVING HIM FIGHT FOR THEIR SIDE, HE REALLY WON FOR OUR SIDE?
YEAH, BUT I DON'T THINK WE PLANNED ON THE RESULTS BEING THIS... COMPLETE.
I CAN'T FEEL MY ELBOWS...

DORK TOWER®

By John Kovalic

IT WAS THIRTY YEARS AGO, TODAY...

I'M WEARING BELLBOTTOMS?

DISCO MATT NEEDS A NEW HOBBY...

DAVE AND GARRY MADE A MAG, OLÉ!

WE'RE CALLING IT "DRAGON."

THE ONLY OTHER CHOICE WAS "DUNGEON," AND THAT WOULD HAVE JUST BEEN DUMB!

THOUGH IT'S NEVER REALLY BEEN IN STYLE...

YOU READ "DRAGON" MAGAZINE? GEEK!

YOU PLAY DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS? SATANIST!

YOU WANT A DATE? NOT! *LOSER!*

IT'S GUARANTEED TO RAISE ~~YOUR CHARACTER'S LEVEL~~ A SMILE

OK...ONLY TWO EXPERIENCE POINTS TO IGOR...

BUT...ACCORDING TO "XP'S AND YOU," IN THE LATEST "DRAGON," THAT MEANS I'M A NOW A FIFTH LEVEL FIGHTER/ RANGER/ASSASSIN/ NECROMANCER/ BERSERKER SKULLCRUSHER/ WEREZOMBIE/ LAWFUL-GOOD CLERIC! HUZZAH!

SO MAY I INTRODUCE TO YOU, THE MAG YOU'VE LOVED FOR THIRTY YEARS...

...AND THE SURGING RANGERS' GNOLLY-HATE CLUB BAND (OF ADVENTURERS)

THIS CARTOON DOESN'T MAKE SENSE ON SO MANY DIFFERENT LEVELS...

AND I AM NOT FIGHTING GNOLLS IN THIS OUTFIT...

LOOK, JUST PLAY ALONG. WE WON'T HAVE TO DO THIS AGAIN FOR ANOTHER THIRTY YEARS...

UMMM... HAPPY THIRTIETH BIRTHDAY, "DRAGON" MAGAZINE! (AND NICE COMICS SECTION, BY THE WAY...)

HUSH! LOOK! GNOLLS! LET'S SURGE FORWARD AND POUND 'EM WITH OUR HATE CLUBS! HUZZAH!

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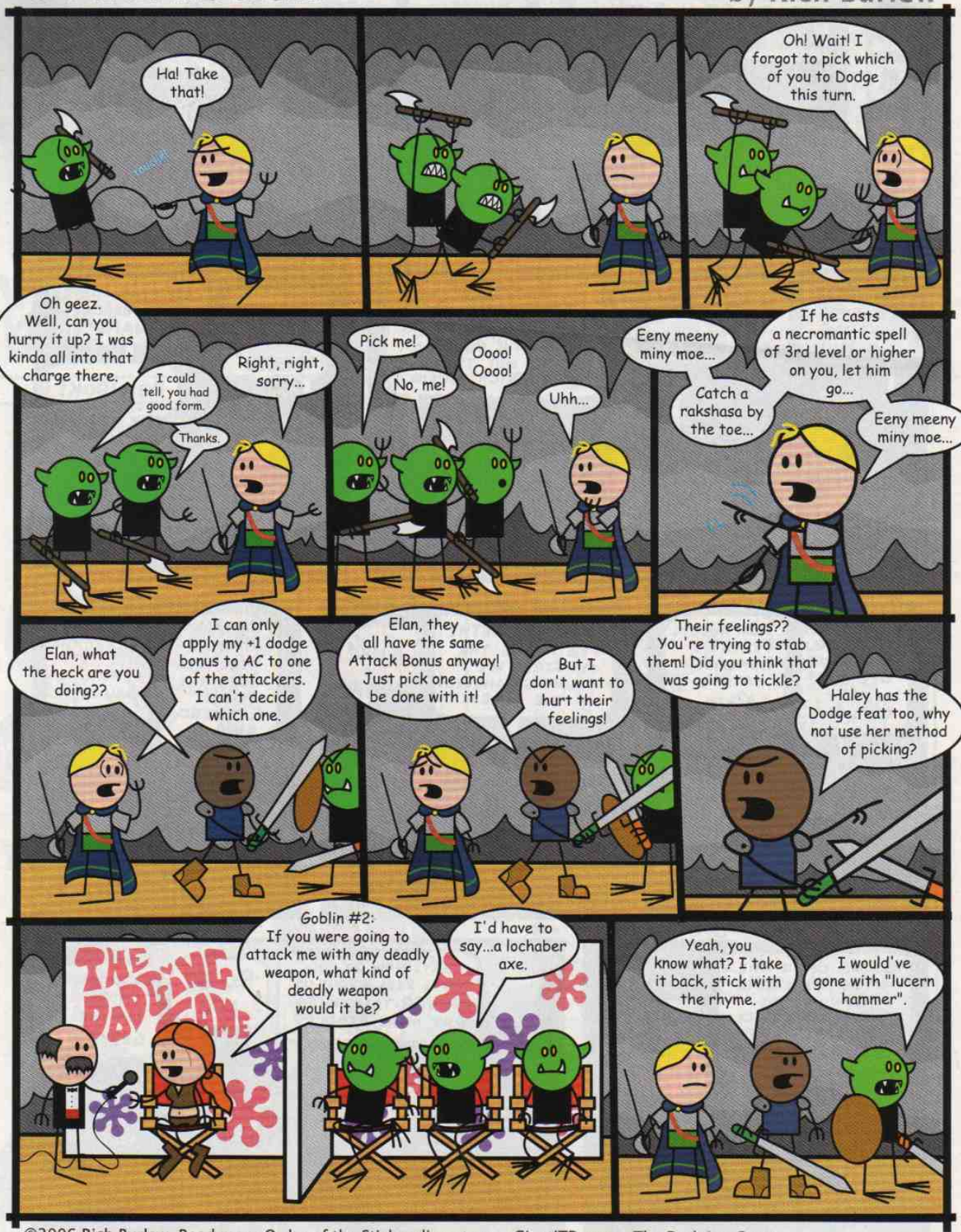
HTTP://WWW.LIVEJOURNAL.COM/USERS/MUSKRAT_JOHN

ZOGONIA
EXCELLENT WORK, FELLOWS! NOW THAT THE APOCALYPSE CUBE HAS BEEN DROPPED INTO THE PIT OF BOTTOMLESSNESS, THE EVIL WIZARD WILL NEVER EMPLOY IT!
SHOULD WE GO KILL THE EVIL WIZARD NOW.. JUST IN CASE?
ALAS, THE EVIL WIZARD IS TOO POWERFUL.
CAN WE STOP CALLING HIM "EVIL WIZARD" ???
FINE. WE WILL START CALLING HIM FELOP.
TONY MOSELEY © 2006 WWW.ZOGONIA.COM
WHY? I THOUGHT HIS NAME WAS KIP.
WASN'T FELOP THE FRIENDLY WIZARD WHO LIKED US?
Oh, right. WELL, I AM CERTAIN HIS NAME IS NOT KIP! KIP WAS EITHER THE MERCHANT WE DID NOT TRUST OR HIS SICK COUSIN.
YOU MEAN ORBALINK AND OBNARD?
HEY! I JUST REMEMBERED HIS NAME!!
POKIBOK!
POKIBOK WAS THE OLD GUY WITH A CHICKEN.
HOW ABOUT FLETH? I REMEMBER SAYING, "FLETH DESERVES DEATH!"
CAN'T BE FLETH! FLETH WAS THE MINSTREL WE FOUND STRANGLED IN THE ALLEY.
GNK!
SO MANY NAMES! TELL ME, DOES THE NAME GEZZERO RING A BELL?
GEZZERO! THAT SOUNDS... ..CLOSE.
GOOD! UNTIL ONE OF US RECOLLECTS OTHERWISE, THE EVIL WIZARD WILL HENCEFORTH BE CALLED GEZZERO!
WHAT OLD MAN WITH A CHICKEN?
SAY, HOW DO YOU GUYS FEEL ABOUT US NEVER TALKING TO ANY MORE PEOPLE?
SO BE IT.
WASN'T THE CHICKEN NAMED GEZZERO?

The Order of the Stick™

by Rich Burlew


Ha! Take that!
Oh! Wait! I forgot to pick which of you to Dodge this turn.
Oh geez. Well, can you hurry it up? I was kinda all into that charge there.
I could tell, you had good form.
Thanks.
Right, right, sorry...
Pick me!
No, me!
Oooo! Oooo!
Uhh...
Eeny meeny miny moe...
Catch a rakshasa by the toe...
If he casts a necromantic spell of 3rd level or higher on you, let him go...
Eeny meeny miny moe...
Elan, what the heck are you doing??
I can only apply my +1 dodge bonus to AC to one of the attackers. I can't decide which one.
Elan, they all have the same Attack Bonus anyway! Just pick one and be done with it!
But I don't want to hurt their feelings!
Their feelings?? You're trying to stab them! Did you think that was going to tickle?
Haley has the Dodge feat too, why not use her method of picking?
THE DODGING GAME
Goblin #2: If you were going to attack me with any deadly weapon, what kind of deadly weapon would it be?
I'd have to say...a lochaber axe.
Yeah, you know what? I take it back, stick with the rhyme.
I would've gone with "lucern hammer".

©2006 Rich Burlew Read more Order of the Stick online at www.GiantITP.com. The Dodging Game

Dragon 344

WEB SUPPLEMENT

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DREADHOLD

"Dreadhold," an Eberron article by Keith Baker, presents a detailed island prison, home to the most powerful, infamous, and blasphemous criminals of Khorvaire. The article covers not just the prison and its wards, but also its inhabitants (guards and prisoners alike) and defenses (magical and mundane). This expansion describes two additional inmates and equipment used by the isle's guards.

Prominent Prisoners

These are two of Dreadhold's most infamous and dangerous prisoners.

Castal d'Cannith
CE male human artificer 18/Heir of Siberys 2

Castal d'Cannith is one of the most brilliant artificers House Cannith has ever produced—and one of the most dangerous. Born in 645 YK, Castal became enthralled with the Traveler and claimed to receive his inspiration from the enigmatic deity. Admitted to the Twelve at merely eleven years old, within a few years it became clear his talent outstripped the senior members of the institute. He produced constructs and items of artifact quality, which others in his organization found impossible to duplicate.

Despite his incredible abilities, his first love was chaos. In 662 YK, he triggered a wave of disasters involving mind-controlled agents, constructs scattered across Khorvaire, and other powerful magic items he had made "for the benefit of society." The Twelve and the Arcane Congress joined forces to stop the terrors, and in 663 YK, they brought Castal to justice. The advocates of House Cannith convinced the others to not kill Castal, in case they ever needed his uncanny abilities again. Far too dangerous to roam freely, he was committed to the Stone Ward of Dreadhold.

The guards of Dreadhold have revived Castal twice in the past three centuries—the second time, he nearly escaped. A genius, given enough time Castal can turn any situation to his advantage. Anyone who revives him takes a terrible chance, and if Castal escapes he could prove a danger to all of Khorvaire.

Kotharel the Harvester
LE 30 HD radiant idol

Dreadhold was built to contain the most dangerous criminals on Khorvaire—mortal or otherwise. Kotharel is a radiant idol (see *Sharn: City of Towers,* page 180), a mighty angel banished from the plane of Syrania and condemned to walk Eberron for eternity. Kotharel claims to be a lord of death, the right hand of the dark god known as the Keeper. Exiled to Eberron in 710 YK, Kotharel soon established a cult of murderers who "harvested" innocent lives in its name. Kotharel's cult survived for 23 years before the knights of Dol Arrah finally found the renegade angel. The battle that followed shook the foundations of Metrol, until at last the knights brought down the radiant idol. But death would not take the Harvester. After all efforts to destroy Kotharel came to naught, those who defeated it brought the fallen angel to Dreadhold and imprisoned it in a dead cell.

Kotharel provides characters with a chance to talk to a powerful outsider under controlled circumstances. Should it be released, it could become a deadly enemy or powerful ally—although any alliance with Kotharel likely ends in betrayal. Kotharel uses the radiant idol statistics provided in *Sharn: City of Towers,* with a few additions: Its domain is Death. Despite possessing 30 Hit Dice, Kotharel is Large as opposed to Huge. It adds the Keeper's fang property to any weapon it wields. Finally, it cannot be killed. It possesses regeneration 5 with no vulnerabilities and immunity to all death effects. It eventually even reforms from *disintegration* effects. All forms of damage become nonlethal damage.

Tools of the Trade

The Kundarak dwarves were professional guardians long before the Mark of Warding appeared, and as such they have a long and rich history of developing items useful—magic and mundane—to guards and wardens.

Gloves of the Locksmith

Gloves of the locksmith allow their wearer to create magical locks.

Description: A pair of *gloves of the locksmith* are usually heavy leather gauntlets studded with dragonshards and bearing the sigil of House Kundarak.

Prerequisite: *Gloves of the locksmith* only function for a character who possesses the *arcane lock* variation of the Least Mark of Warding.

Activation: As a standard action, the wearer holds out her hand toward a door, concentrating on the gloves with her fingers splayed and hand open wide.

Effect: Three times per day, the proper wearer may cast *arcane seal.* In addition, she can attach up to three separate platinum keys to the effect, as the spell. As a general rule, a Kundarak locksmith provides two of these keys to the customer, and holds one key at the Kundarak enclave—this provides a way to gain access to a sealed location in an emergency.

The power of the gloves can only be used a total of three times per day, regardless of who wears them.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate abjuration; CL 5th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, Least Mark of Warding, *arcane seal;* 5,000 gp, 400 XP, 10 days.

Weight: —

Price: 10,000 gp.

Heavy Hand Manacles

These restraints are designed to prevent arcane spellcasters from casting spells, while

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still allowing them to use their hands for simple tasks such as eating.

At a glance, heavy hand manacles look like the arms from a suit of plate mail: steel gauntlets and thick sheathes for the forearm and upper arm, bound together with chains lashed across the front and back of the wearer's torso. Additional chains connect the elbows and wrists, preventing the wearer form moving his arms more than 18 inches apart.

Heavy hands are considered to be medium armor. They provide a +1 armor bonus to AC, with a maximum Dex bonus of +2, an arcane spell failure chance of 80%, and an armor check penalty of –4 (increased to –8 for Sleight of Hand). A wearer also takes a –3 penalty on all attack rolls requiring the use if his hands.

A character can escape a set of heavy hand manacles with a DC 40 Escape Artist check. Breaking free of the restraints requires a DC 30 Strength check. The chain harness must be bound with a lock, which is not included in the cost of the item.

Heavy hands cost 95 gp and weigh 15 pounds.

ECOLOGY OF THE DRACOLICH

Written by Richard Pett and Greg A. Vaughn, "The Ecology of the Dracolich" delves into the foul mysteries of undead dragons and their terrible powers. The article includes a small sidebar about alternative dracoliches. Presented here is an expanded version of that sidebar, complete with an example: a hydra dracolich.

Alternative Dracoliches

Not all dracoliches are true dragons. In fact, any creature with the dragon type can become one of these undead horrors, opening the door for dracolich wyverns, dragon turtles, and all manner of half-dragons. Surviving the process of becoming a dracolich is an incredibly painful and trying experience for a mortal spirit, though, and one not even all dragons survive. Thus, while non-true dragon dracoliches do exist, they are incredibly rare.

Example Alternative Dracolich

Deep in the Great Southern Swamp lies a ruined temple dedicated to demonic powers where the vampiric lizardfolk king Saktha and his black dragon servant Aulicus once raised an army to war against nearby human lands. Although the undead swamp king's machinations were crushed and his body destroyed, his taint was not fully expunged from his murky empire. Soon after his defeat, Saktha's surviving followers discovered the bones of Aulicus and the ashes of the lizardfolk tyrant. Entreating their dark patrons for aid, the demon worshipers created a new body for their fallen king, constructing it from the bones of the black dragon and an aged hydra, one of the most powerful denizens of the great swamp. His essence channeled into the amalgam body through countless sacrifices, Sakatha—or something that claims to be Sakatha—has been reborn and seeks to spread the infamy of his undying legend once again.

Sakatha the Deathless **CR 17**

Male half-black-dragon twelve-headed hydra dracolich

NE Huge undead

Draconomicon 147

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +17, Spot +17

Language Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Lizardfolk, Undercommon

AC 28, touch 9, flat-footed 27

hp 153 (12 HD); fast healing 22; **DR** 5/ bludgeoning

Immune acid, cold, electricity, paralysis, polymorph, sleep; undead traits

SR 16

Fort +14, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6

Spd 20 ft. (6 squares), 40 ft. fly (average), swim 20 ft.

Melee 12 bites +24 melee (2d8+13 plus 1d6 cold plus paralysis) and
2 claws +18 melee (1d8+6 plus 1d6 cold plus paralysis)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +26

Special Attack breath weapon (60-foot line, 6d8 acid, DC 19), *control undead*, paralyzing gaze

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th)
1/3 days—*control undead*

Abilities Str 37, Dex 12, Con –, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 17

SQ invulnerability

Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes[B], Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Bluff +5, Hide +11, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (history) +7, Knowledge (religion) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +7, Listen +14, Spot +14, Survival +7, Swim +28

Possessions *belt of giant's Strength +6, ring of Charisma +4* (as *cloak of Charisma +4*), *ring of x-ray vision*

Breath Weapon (Su) Sakatha's single black dragon head can breath a 60-foot line of acid once per day that deals 6d8 points of damage. A DC 19 Reflex save halves this damage.

Paralyzing Gaze (Su) Sakatha's gaze can paralyze victims within 40 feet who fail a DC 19 Fortitude save. If the saving throw is successful, the victim is forever immune to his gaze. If it fails, the victim is paralyzed for 2d6 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Paralysis (Su) Any creature struck by one of Sakatha's physical attacks must make a DC 19 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 2d6 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Invulnerability If Sakatha is slain, his spirit immediately returns to his phylactery—a fist-sized black diamond embedded in a life-sized golden representation of him as a lizardfolk king. See Aurgloroasa's stats (see page 88 of *Dragon* #344) for a full description of this ability.

PLANAR DRAGONS

"Planar Dragons," by Mike McArtor, presents four all-new dragons from the Astral Plane and three Outer Planes (from the Abyss, Elysium, and Hades). Elysian dragons enjoy alcohol and revelry to a ridiculous level, and spend much of their time lazing about. They enjoy their alcohol so much, in fact, that they forgot to include their great wyrm stats for the table on page 33. Silly drunk dragons. To help DMs avoid guesswork, we present here the missing line.

ELYSIAN DRAGONS BY AGE

Age	Size	Hit Dice (hp)	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	Base Attack/ Grapple	Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Breath Weapon (DC)	Frightful Presence DC
Great wyrm	G	37d12+296 (536)	35	10	27	24	21	22	+37/+61	+45	+28	+20	+25	12d6 (36)	34

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